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ABSTRACT

Student Action Teams (SATs) were established in 20 Victoria, Australia, secondary schools in 1999, with 11 of those schools continuing with their teams in 2000. The Student Action Teams are comprised of groups of students who identify a school or community issue, research it, make plans and proposals about it, and take action on it. Such initiatives, as part of the school curriculum, engage students in purposeful activities that are valued by the students, that have broader community value, and that meet or exceed mandated curriculum goals. An evaluation, based on progress reports and issues papers, an extensive database, and case studies, found that the SAT program resulted in positive outcomes, including a high identification of students with SATs, flexibility of the teams to work on local issues in a responsive way, integration of the SAT concept into the curriculum, and community links to safety and crime prevention initiatives. Personal and educational outcomes for students included increased awareness of community safety issues, enhanced communication and teamwork skills, and school credits. Issues to consider include the following: (1) understanding of community safety and the "at-risk" requirement of the program; (2) training in leadership, team work, community, and safety; (3) program support and accountability; (4) organizational sustainability; and (5) integration of SAT into the curriculum. Appended are: Initial Program Information, Schools Involved list, and Reference list. (Contains 11 references.) (KC)

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STUDENT ACTION TEAMS

An Evaluation: 1999-2000

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This Working Paper is based on an evaluation report on Student Action Teams which was produced with support from the Victorian Department of Justice and the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training as part of the evaluation of Student Action Teams. The views expressed in this paper, however, are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Department of Justice, the Department of Education, Employment and Training, the Youth Research Centre, the Faculty of Education or The University of Melbourne.

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ACRONYMS

Some acronyms are used throughout this report:

ACSA	Australian Curriculum Studies Association
CCE	Civics and Citizenship Education
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CLP	Community Learning Project
CSF	Curriculum and Standards Framework
DEET	Department of Education, Employment and Training
DEFY	Driver Education for Youth
DOE	Department of Education (pre-2000)
KLA	Key Learning Area
MYAN	Melton Youth Advisory Network
PCCC	Police and Community Consultative Committee
PI	Performance Indicator
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SAT	Student Action Team
SCIP	Student Community Involvement Program
SCS	Safer Cities and Shires (Program)
SES	State Emergency Service
SOSE	Studies of Society and the Environment
SLC	Student Leadership Council
SRC	Student Representative Council
TAC	Traffic Accident Commission
TRIP	Teacher Release to Industry Program
VASSP	Victorian Association of Secondary School Principals
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VISE	Victorian Institute for Secondary Education
VMG	Vertical Modular Grouping
VYDP	Victorian Youth Development Program
WSE	Wider Sport/Education
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YRC	Youth Research Centre

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This Working Paper would not have been possible without the information, advice and action of students and teachers in Student Action Teams throughout Victoria in 1999 and 2000. We thank them for their initiative, perseverance and vision, and for sharing that with us.

The Student Action Teams Program was funded by the Victorian Department of Justice's Crime Prevention Strategy through the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training.

The SAT Project Advisory Group provided valuable support and linkages between the various organisations and departments involved, and gave useful feedback on this document and on other aspects of the project's operation.

Program Managers within the Department of Education, Employment and Training maintained an overview, kept the whole project on track and were supportive of school innovation and development.

Summary

Background

The Student Action Teams Program was set up in Victoria in 1998 as a collaboration between the Victorian Government's Department of Justice (as part of the *Vic*safe Community Safety and Crime Prevention Framework) and the Department of Education. Under this Program, Student Action Teams were established in twenty Victorian secondary schools in 1999, and eleven of these schools continued with their teams as part of the Program in 2000.

In a Student Action Team (SAT), a group of students identify and tackle a school or community issue: they research the issue, make plans and proposals about it, and take action on it. Such initiatives, as part of the formal or informal school curriculum, engage students in purposeful, authentic activities which are **valued by the students**, which **have broader community value** and which meet **or exceed mandated curriculum goals**.

Student Action Teams are based on the following principles:

- that students can make serious and important **decisions** about issues that are important to them;
- that students can **do** important and valuable things: they have skills, expertise and a knowledge of the needs of their community;
- that important action can be undertaken as part of students' **learning** in school: community-focused research and action is an appropriate educational approach for schools to adopt.

While the examples outlined in this report draw upon the experience of schools in forming and supporting Student Action Teams around the topic of 'community safety', the idea of Student Action Teams has broader applicability. The value of the curriculum approach demonstrated through this Program is that it is adaptable or 'portable' elsewhere. The approaches outlined here are essentially curriculum approaches that can be used around **any topic**.

Evaluation

This Working Paper is drawn from the final report of the evaluation of the Student Action Teams Program. The evaluation was carried out by the Youth Research Centre (YRC).

Evaluation tasks were defined in the evaluation brief to include:

- provision of advice and support throughout 1999 (and later in 2000) to all participating schools;
- provision of advice on the strengths and limitations of the leadership skills program; and
- measurement of the extent to which the Student Action Teams Program met the intended aims.

This report draws upon earlier **Progress Reports** and **Issues Papers**, and also the extensive database established from interviews with Student Action Teams. It includes Case Studies written about the schools, and cleared by these schools as an accurate account of their work. In addition, a **Student Action Teams 'How To' Manual** has been produced by the evaluation team.

Processes

The implementation processes adopted by the Program are described in this report.

The aims of the Program were to:

- involve secondary school students in school based groups working together with teachers and other professionals to investigate, identify and implement strategies for improving community safety;
- improve and extend leadership opportunities amongst participating students; and
- secure the sustainable implementation of Student Action Teams within the normal resources available to Victorian government secondary schools.

The Program was managed by the Department of Education, with the support of a Student Action Teams Reference Group with representatives from the Departments of Justice and Education, Office for Youth, local government and the Secondary Principals' Association.

Training

The development of leadership skills in students and teachers was a key aim of the SAT Program. The provision of training was therefore a central part of the Program planning. The Australian Red Cross – Victoria was selected to provide the training support. They conducted a one-day teacher training activity in February 1999 and a two-day student training activity in March 1999 for a team comprising four students and a teacher from each participating school. Feedback from the schools was generally very positive about the two day training program.

The YRC Evaluation Team conducted a teacher professional development activity to assist teachers in sharing information about the various approaches being taken with the implementation of SAT and Student and Teacher Reporting Days at the end of 1999 and 2000, at which schools reported on their SAT project and achievements and shared experiences.

School Implementation

Implementation of the SAT Program occurred at a school level. There were three general approaches:

1. where students were identified and they chose the issue:
2. where the topic was chosen by the school (usually teachers) and interested students identified; and
3. where SAT was incorporated in an existing school program or activity, eg the Student Representative Council (SRC), Victorian Youth Development Program (VYDP) or as part of a subject.

Some schools conducted the SAT Program during normal class time as part of their class activities; other schools conducted SAT during students' time ie lunch time and before and after school; several schools conducted SAT by withdrawing students from their scheduled classes.

The Concept of Student Action Teams

Definition and Outline

In a Student Action Team (SAT), a group of students identify and tackle a school or community issue: they research the issue, make plans and proposals about it, and take action on it. Student Action Teams provide schools with a student-centred and active educational approach to community-based learning and community linkages.

These Student Action Teams may occur within the formal curriculum, that is, within a particular subject; they may occur in relation to other school programs such as a Student Council; they may involve a defined group of students meeting in classtime or a lunchtime, recess or after school. What is common, however, is the idea that the research, planning and action is identified, decided and carried out by students, is based on teamwork, and occurs in a community setting (which includes the schools) and in a context of solving real problems.

The Context

There has been increased attention recently paid to a variety of community-based learning approaches that build partnerships between schools and the wider community (Cumming, 1997 and 1999). In part, such approaches have drawn interest and support from the move to 'Full Service Schools', in which service delivery (particularly for marginalised young people and their families) in education, human and community services is being developed in a holistic and coordinated way (Stokes and Tyler, 1997; McLeod and Stokes, 1999).

Such approaches, however, also draw on a longer tradition of active student participation and of attention to the purposes of learning (Holdsworth, 2000). It has been pointed out that for many young people, 'deferred outcomes' of learning (in terms of distant goals of employment, citizenship, or acknowledged community roles) are not sufficient to sustain their motivation and commitment to learning. As young people are held in education and, potentially, in relatively passive roles for longer periods of time, it is important that there are initiatives within schools that create real roles of community value for young people. Such initiatives would, as part of the curriculum, engage students in purposeful, authentic activities which are **valued by the students**, which **have broader community value** and which **meet or exceed mandated curriculum goals**.

These ideas also thread through programs addressing issues of Civics and Citizenship Education (Holdsworth, England, Stokes, Tyler and Carson, 2000) and around the Middle Years of Schooling (ACSA, 1996).

Precedents and Examples

A Student Action Team approach has previously been used around health, drug use, safety, environment or other community topics. Examples can be found in which University or College students form such teams. Fewer documented examples are available of such teams operating within a primary or secondary school setting. Thus, the importance of the current work outlined in this report is that it says that **school** students **can** be responsible for important matters, and can be interested and involved in their community to **make a difference**.

Similar approaches to building student action around community issues such as community safety have previously been identified in schools in:

- Queensland: Youth Action Teams have been formed within Youth Development Programs (AusYouth, 2001); there is also reference to similar structures called Youth Action Panels, set up within a crime prevention framework in 1995;
- Britain: within a crime prevention framework (Crime Concern, 2000); and
- Victoria: in the Youth Action Program operating at a cluster of schools in the early 1980s (VISE, 1984).

Principles

Student Action Teams are based on the following principles:

- that students can make serious and important **decisions** about issues that are important to them;
- that students can **do** important and valuable things: they have skills, expertise and a knowledge of the needs of their community;
- that important action can be undertaken as part of students' **learning** in school: community-focused research and action is an appropriate educational approach for schools to adopt.

In establishing Student Action Teams, these principles appear in the ways in which schools regard their students:

- **trusting** students, particular those who are marginalised and disillusioned;
- **expecting** that students can and will do significant things in their community;
- **enabling** and **supporting** students to carry out community research and action.

Generic Value of the Student Action Team Approach

While the examples outlined in this report draw upon the experience of schools in forming and supporting Student Action Teams around the topic of 'community safety', the idea of Student Action Teams has broader applicability. The approaches outlined here are essentially curriculum approaches that can be used around **any topic**.

The value of the curriculum approach demonstrated through this Program is that it is adaptable or 'portable' elsewhere: other themes for community-based action (eg 'environment') could have been chosen. The school-level curriculum and organisational principles involved in Student Action Teams are the critical ones.

Role of an 'External Focus'

There is enormous value in having some form of 'external focus' such as 'community safety', 'health', 'drug use', 'environment' or 'homelessness' in that this:

- provides the team with rigour in addressing issues;
- assists the team in deciding what is worthwhile to act upon;
- provides the team with other specific points of community linkage;
- provides the Program with internal linkage and consistency.

While 'community-based action/learning' has been suggested as such a possible focus, previous program experience indicates a danger that this might be too broad. While the 'community' provides an important element of the work of a Student Action Team, to focus solely on this can still leave the need for a uniting focus unresolved. Further, for many schools, there continue to be debates as to the nature of their 'community'.

The nature of the 'action' of a Student Action Teams benefits from an external focus. The community then becomes the **location** for this focus and for action around it. In some cases, the particular focus is important in **creating** the nature of the community to which the school links (eg links with Safer Cities and Shires, with LandCare, with Health Centres and so on).

In choosing a theme for a Student Action Teams Program, it is important that it:

- is meaningful to and 'owned by' the student team;
- is accessible to community action;
- is appropriate to the age range of students; and
- achieves a balance between the specificity of the focus and the flexibility to adapt to community needs and to students' perceptions/identification of needs.

Victorian Statewide Student Action Team Program 1999-2000

Definition

This Working Paper is drawn from the final report of an evaluation of the experience of 20 Victorian schools who were supported in 1999 and 2000 to set up Student Action Teams around the issue of 'community safety'. They received support from the Victorian Department of Justice and the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training.

The initial documentation defined Student Action Teams in this way:

> The Student Action Teams Program is a component of the Vicsafe *Community Safety and Crime Prevention Framework*. Student action teams will involve young people working together with teachers, local government and other community groups (within the Safer Cities and Shires Framework) to investigate, identify and implement strategies for promoting safer communities....
>
> School based partnerships to enhance community safety is an important component of the *Youth Community Safety and Crime Prevention Strategy* currently being devised by the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Board.
>
> Schools have been identified as providing an ideal base for developing a range of strategies that aim to provide young people with opportunities for leadership development and participation in their local community, opportunities for learning important skills in action based research and development and opportunities to play a role in local problem solving initiatives.
>
> Funding has been made available by the Department of Justice to the Department of Education to provide seeding grants for Student Action Teams. Investment in this Program will aim to encourage and empower young people in schools to develop project teams and partnerships with teachers, police and members of other agencies to help create safer communities.

Initiation - Departments of Justice and Education

Proposals for a Victorian Student Action Teams Program were initiated by the Victorian Department of Justice in proposals to the Victorian Cabinet's Community Safety and Crime Prevention Board in 1996. They were based on reports of similar approaches in Queensland (Youth Action Panels in the mid 1990s, and Youth Action Teams within a Youth Development Program focus more recently: AusYouth, 2001) and in Britain (around the Crime Concern organisation: Crime Concern, 2000). The proposal was developed within the context of the Safer Cities and Shires Program and was seen to be an education component of this Program. Officers from the Department of Justice then negotiated with Department of Education, Employment and Training for their support and for implementation of a Program within Victorian Government schools.

A contract and implementation strategy was developed between Departments, and funding provided by the Department of Justice for what was initially envisaged to be a once-off and one-year Program.

Responsibility for the implementation of the Student Action Team Program was initially located within the (then) Department of Education's Student Welfare Branch. When the officer designated as Program Manager moved to the School Community Support Branch (before the Program actually began operation), management responsibility was shifted to that Branch.

The Program was advertised to schools in late 1998 through both the Victorian Department of Education's **School News** and through circulation of a 4-page pamphlet. This pamphlet (reflecting the initial documentation) described the proposal:

> In 1999, approximately 20 schools across Victoria will receive seeding funding to assist in the formation of Student Action Teams. These teams will involve young people working together with teachers, local government and other community groups to investigate, identify and implement strategies for promoting safer communities...
>
> Strategies developed within the Program will provide students with opportunities for:
>
> - learning important skills in action based research and development;
> - leadership development;
> - participation in their local community, including playing a role in local problem solving initiatives...
>
> It has been suggested that approaches and strategies undertaken by the Student Action Teams will be determined by those teams (involving student decision-making) and be responsive to local issues. This necessarily requires a local action-based investigative component; however, as a guide, it has been suggested that local processes may result in initiatives:
>
> 1. to promote safe sport and recreation, safe routes to school and personal safety.
> 2. to foster expanded cultural understanding and care for vulnerable groups in the community.
> 3. to investigate and respond to local community safety issues such as:
>   - local recreation and public transport options;
>   - issues surrounding young people's use of public space;
>   - any of the fourteen key issue areas arising under the Safer Cities and Shires Program.
> 4. to achieve reductions in school bullying and non-attendance.
> 5. to deal with drug and alcohol abuse.

In the Program documentation, it was also suggested that Student Action Teams Program would have a specific focus on the **participation of marginalised students**. Thus Student Action Teams were seen to provide a different way of learning, and different paths to success, for **all** students - **including** those whose previous experience had been that of disengagement, failure and/or boredom.

Schools were invited to apply for participation in the Program and funding grants were proposed:

> Seeding funding is available to selected schools to assist in the implementation of the Program. Funding may be used to cover teacher release, publication of materials and other associated costs. All funding will be on a one-off non-recurrent basis and projects will need to demonstrate their viability beyond the seeding grant.

Program Aims and Objectives

The initial Program documentation specified objectives and performance indicators that were agreed between the Departments of Justice and Education.

In more general terms, the aims of the Program were notified to schools. They were to:

- involve secondary school students in school based groups working together with teachers and other professionals to investigate, identify and implement strategies for improving community safety;
- improve and extend leadership opportunities amongst participating students; and
- secure the sustainable implementation of Student Action Teams within the normal resources available to Victorian government secondary schools.

The outcomes for students, teachers and schools were also specified to include:

- opportunities for students to fulfil the Communication Project work requirements in units 1 and 2 of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE);
- opportunities for students to achieve learning outcomes related to Civics and Citizenship Education, in particular those within the Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) Key Learning Area including the

Place and Space, Resources, and Natural and social systems strands;

- improved student leadership;
- potential for teachers to receive tertiary accreditation;
- improved functioning and operation of the student representative council; and
- increased and improved partnerships between schools, local government and community groups.

Evaluation Framework

The evaluation of the Student Action Teams Program was carried out by the Youth Research Centre. Initially, this evaluation was to occur during 1999 only, but with the extension of the Program into 2000, there was a consequent extension of evaluation timeline and tasks.

These evaluation tasks were defined initially in the evaluation brief to include:

- provision of advice and support throughout 1999 to all participating schools;
- provision of advice on the strengths and limitations of the leadership skills program; and
- measurement of the extent to which the Student Action Teams Program met the intended aims.

Thus the evaluation framework included both formative and summative components. The Program had already specified certain objectives and performance indicators and an indication was provided of how these might be mapped against evaluation tasks.

Program Implementation

The Victorian Student Action Teams Program initially involved 20 secondary schools in 1999. The Program was managed by the Department of Education (as it then was), with the support of a Student Action Teams Reference Group which comprised representatives from the Department of Justice, Department of Education, Office for Youth, Banyule City Council, VASSP and Melton Secondary College. This group met quarterly and provided advice to the Program Manager on the planning and development of the Program.

Selection of Schools and Program Orientation

The Youth Research Centre was selected as the Program Evaluation team after the initial selection of the schools and their orientation for the first year had been completed. Thus the following comments are based on interviews with and feedback from teachers, students, Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) staff, Department of Justice personnel and other interested individuals, rather than on direct observation by the evaluators.

Approximately 30 schools applied for support within the Program, and a selection of twenty schools was made by the Program Manager with advice from members of the Reference Group. These schools were located in six of the Department of Education's nine regions (see **Appendices 1 and 2** for the initial information and for the list of schools). An orientation briefing was conducted for administrators and teachers from schools in December, 1998.

Training

The development of leadership skills in students and teachers was a key aim of the SAT Program. The provision of training was therefore a central part of the Program planning. A number of community organisations were invited to tender for the provision of the training for students, teachers and schools participating in the SAT Program. The Australian Red Cross – Victoria was selected to provide the training support.

The SAT Program was initiated with a one day teacher training activity (15 February, 1999) and a two day student training activity (15th and 16th March 1999). On the first of these training activities, teachers identified as SAT support personnel worked in small groups to discuss and identify key issues that they wanted to have addressed in the program. These included:

- **networking and external support:**
  - sharing ideas about other schools' programs: networking;
  - Red Cross to facilitate links between schools around projects;
  - availability of Red Cross for visiting schools and the importance of an external role in raising the Program's profile;
  - timelines for the delivery of training (ie up front, or responsive to needs?);
  - links and coordination with Safer Cities and Shires, and external time imperatives;
- **program operation within schools:**
  - outcomes required and external requirements;
  - time management in organising and supporting students;
  - community knowledge and understanding - whose responsibility this is;
  - how to link with feeder schools;
- **students:**
  - how to involve 'at risk' students;
  - student initiative and drive for projects;
  - the flexibility of the program to adapt to meet student needs;
  - adaptability of leadership material to different age groups (junior, middle, senior);
  - how to identify student, how many in a SAT team; individual class, SRC and whole school arrangements;
  - promoting leadership opportunities for students outside traditional ones.
- **curriculum links:**
  - where SAT fits within a school curriculum;
  - integration with existing resources and program;

For the two-day student training activity in March, a team comprising four students and a teacher from each participating school was invited to attend the seminar. Over 100 teachers and students attended. This training activity also included an official launch of the SAT Program by the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Education.

The program covered the following areas (further details of the program are available directly from the Australian Red Cross - Victoria):

- introduction of participating schools;
- outline of the SAT Program and training;
- introduction of team members and their expectations;
- leadership and values;
- discovering hidden resources;
- project management;
- issues in volunteering;
- school team planning.

The teams were given a copy of the Australian Red Cross **Leadership Manual,** which was a draft version of the manual for the Red Cross **Community Challenge** Program. Activities from this manual were included in the two day program and school teams were encouraged to use the manual to conduct their own training activities at school.

The Australian Red Cross – Victoria offered to provide on-going support and training to participating schools. Some schools took up this offer and a number used the **Leadership Manual** in the early stages of the Program.

Feedback from the schools was generally very positive about the two day training program. Students enjoyed the event, in particular meeting students from across the State. Those teams visiting from rural and regional areas enjoyed the opportunity to stay in a city hotel and visit attractions in Melbourne. The training team also conducted their own evaluation of the day and noted very high levels of satisfaction with the activities.

Further Professional Development

The YRC Evaluation Team conducted a teacher professional development activity (2 September 1999). This half day program was designed to assist teachers in sharing information about the various approaches being taken with the implementation of SAT, to outline and discuss some of the school-level documentation requirements and to begin planning for the extension of the Program into 2000. It was attended by approximately 20 teachers from 15 of the schools, plus other related personnel.

This program provided an opportunity for all stakeholders (Department of Justice, Department of Education, Safer Cities and Shires Program, Australian Red Cross, teachers and the YRC) to identify issues and discuss strategies or clarify expectations. This activity highlighted the positive role that the SAT Program was playing at the school-community level. Responses from participants were very positive.

On 29th November 1999, at the suggestion of the Evaluation Team and with further funding from the Program, a student and teacher Reporting Day was conducted in Melbourne. Schools were invited to send teams of up to four students and a teacher to this reporting day. The main activity was based around each SAT team preparing a report on their SAT project and achievements and the sharing of these experiences. Details of the 2000 SAT Program were also outlined and there was discussion about the focus of the extended Program and how schools should apply. A report of this day was contained in the second SAT Newsletter. Again, evaluation responses to the day were very positive.

In 2000, schools were encouraged to conduct their own initial training activities. Several schools took on this challenge themselves, two invited the YRC to conduct a training activity for them and one school worked with the Red Cross team to conduct a training activity.

The YRC conducted a further student and teacher Reporting/Evaluation Day in December 2000, again with extended Program funding. This program focused on sharing information about the SAT project in each school, identifying what students had learnt through their participation in SAT and planning for the continuation of SAT in the schools.

School Level Implementation

The approaches to the implementation of the SAT Program at the school level were very diverse. These various approaches can be grouped together in three general approaches:

1. where students were identified and they chose the issue;
2. where the topic was chosen by the school (usually teachers) and interested students identified; and
3. where SAT was incorporated in an existing school program or activity eg the SRC, VYDP or as part of a subject.

The reasons schools gave for choosing particular students or groups of students also varied considerably and responded to which of the above approaches had been adopted. This flexibility was important in enabling the school to shape the Program to suit their local needs and priorities.

In some schools there was an issue that the school and/or the students were already keen to address, prior to the operation of the SAT. In these cases the identification of the issue helped identify the students to be involved. For example in Bright and Kyneton the issue was a skate park facility and in each case there was a group of students that had been active in skateboarding and trying to get a skate park in their community. At Altona, teachers had identified school truancy as an issue they wished the team to investigate, and this, in turn, defined the students who became members of the team.

At other schools, the team was formed from interested or identified students, and they then proceeded to discuss and decide on a topic. For some, the initial training days provided ideas; for others, further discussion continued over protracted periods at school. Some schools took considerable time to decide on an issue, or worked on several smaller topics while clarifying a more major idea.

Some schools expressed interest in the SAT Program as it provided them with another opportunity to promote leadership amongst the students. In these schools SAT was generally incorporated in the school's organisational structure or curriculum and students were identified through their classes or through their participation in the student forums.

Issues emerged about the selection of students as participants in the Program, with some schools choosing already active and successful 'student leaders', while others chose marginalised students, or those exhibiting 'non-traditional' forms of leadership. This issue is explored later in this Working Paper.

Some schools conducted the SAT Program during normal class time as part of their class activities; other schools conducted SAT during students' time ie lunch time and before and after school; several schools conducted SAT by withdrawing students from their scheduled classes.

Central Support Processes

The Program was operated by a Program Manager from the Schools Operation Division of the Department of Education. As noted above, advice was provided on planning and development to the Program Manager by the Student Action Teams Reference Group.

Support for the operation of schools occurred in four areas:

- **Funding for schools - both in terms of direct grants, and in terms of funding for support activities:** Funding for the Program was provided by the Department of Justice as part of their 'Vicsafe' initiatives. The funds were managed by the Department of Education and participating schools were provided with annual grants to support the implementation of their projects. In addition, teacher release, accommodation and other costs were met for central student and teacher activities.
- **Visits:** During the second half of 1999, the Program Manager visited a number of the schools following encouragement from the evaluation team. Early in 2000 the Program Manager retired and some time passed before a new Program Manager was confirmed. Late in 2000 the new Program Manager and the Reference Group arranged for all SAT teams to be visited again to provide encouragement and support, and an extension of funding was provided to the Evaluation team to enable that to happen.
- **Training and Support:** The Australian Red Cross – Victoria provided the initial training and offered to visit schools as requested. Only some of schools took up this offer from Red Cross.
- **Formative Evaluation:** The YRC Evaluation Team visited participating schools several times during 1999 and 2000; these visits provided practical advice and support in addition to the collection of information about the projects. In addition, the YRC prepared and distributed three issues of a newsletter to all participating schools, highlighting progress reports from SAT teams, raising process issues, and giving contact details and information about other relevant resources. The YRC also established an e-mail group for ease of information exchange, though this system was not used to any great extent by schools or SAT teams.

Year 2 Selection

A decision was made late in 1999 to invite participating schools to apply for further funding for a continuation of their involvement in the Program and schools were notified in December. To qualify for consideration schools were asked to develop submissions that addressed the following issues:

- Identify the community safety issues to be addressed;
- How they would document their processes and outcomes during the year;
- How they would link with a neighbouring school or schools to foster their involvement in SAT.

Some of the existing schools did not apply for extended Program funding. In some cases this was because they were going to continue with their local SAT type project in the school using the previous funding, or because they could not sustain a continued commitment to the Program. A small number of the schools also identified issues which had no community safety focus, and therefore these were not supported for further funding.

Of the original 20 schools, 13 were initially approved for continued funding. However one school did not proceed with the application by the deadline provided, and a further school eventually withdrew from the second year when the principal contact teacher took leave. Thus eleven schools were finally approved by the Program Manager and the Reference Group for continuation of funding in 2000. These schools were notified at the end of 1999.

Year 2 Implementation

About half of the eleven schools continued with substantially the same SAT team from 1999, while the others identified a completely new group of students for the SAT.

There was no central training activity organised for the start of the 2000 SAT Program. Schools were encouraged to conduct their own training and orientation. As noted above, some schools invited the YRC and other groups to assist them with this initial training and supported this from their grants. Schools were also visited twice during 2000 by the YRC Evaluation Team.

The issues identified by Student Action Teams were now more strongly focused on community safety issues and generally the teams were more highly organised, though some (in the absence of direct contact from the Program early in the year) took some time to develop and start work on their particular focus issue. In particular those teams that continued on from 1999 were highly motivated and used their existing networks to plan and implement their projects.

The final Reporting/Evaluation Day in December 2000 involved the sharing of achievements and enabled teams to plan for the continuation of SAT within their school. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services attended and presented all teams and participants with certificates of recognition.

Some Case Stories

The following are short descriptions of the Student Action Teams at each of the eleven schools that completed two years in the Program. These descriptions have been developed from discussions and interviews at the schools, and have been 'cleared' by the SAT coordinator at the school. Each follows a similar format to enable comparisons to be made.

Altona Secondary College

Altona Secondary College is located in Melbourne's western suburbs. The school population in 1999-2000 was approximately 500 students, and from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

The Issue

The SAT at Altona started its work by researching truancy within the school - why students truanted, what they did and-so on. The focus came to be on providing activities for students (so they wouldn't truant), and on developing a school Student Discipline and Welfare Policy so that students had some definitive guidelines which would be understood by all in the school community.

In 1998 the Student Welfare Coordinator and Student Representative Council liaison teacher decided on the topic of student absenteeism. This arose from discussions within the school. Absenteeism was not seen to be an enormous issue in the school, but there was some anecdotal information that the issue may have been bigger than previously thought. In particular, period by period absenteeism was thought to have been a bigger issue.

Given current media coverage about student truancy, the project dealing with 'Student Absenteeism' in the school is aimed to devise strategies to 'keep students at school', to create better educational opportunities for students (particularly those truanting) and help keep these students 'off the streets' and away from the associated risks to themselves and the community when truancy occurs.

The Students

In 1999, four students were on the SAT; these were from years 9 to 11, and were two males and two females. Even though these students were not all the formal 'leaders' in the school, they were chosen by teachers for the team because they were leaders in their own peer groups. At least a couple of the students had already exhibited a significant rate of absenteeism. But all were seen as having leadership qualities - for better or worse in some cases. Teachers were open about these reasons with the students and approached this group with a proposal that they make up the team. Team membership was portrayed positively, and was seen to provide them with importance and direction.

In 2000, there were again four students on the team. This was substantially a new group, and they were chosen for similar reasons to those of the 1999 team.

Action

The team met fortnightly or as required, with students withdrawn from classes. There was an attempt to match these times with spare classes for the senior students. The team approached these meetings in a structured and formal, but also relaxed manner.

The team met with the school Administration, and with the Adolescent Health Team, to discuss issues and to approve their directions. The team began by making a survey of students about truancy: why they truant, how often and what they do. They then developed action proposals based on this evidence. The students also focused on student initiated strategies to be put to School Council for implementation in Semester 2, 2000.

This marked a broadening of the focus into 2000, from student absenteeism to general student behaviour. One strategy for improving attendance from the first year of operation was to develop a more workable Welfare and Discipline Policy so that students had definitive guidelines which, along with activities and curriculum initiatives, would hopefully ensure the attendance of 'waggers' and students at risk. The Team conducted a review of the Policy, collecting student, parent, staff and community input, and putting the Policy proposals to the staff review committee. The Policy developed by the Team was finally accepted by the staff at the end of 2000.

At the same time, the Altona SAT also worked on setting up lunchtime activities for students such as a radio station, a debating club, dance, and sports. These activities were all designed to diversify school-based activities, to make school more 'interesting' and thus hold students who would otherwise truant.

Outcomes

The Team has had its Student Discipline Policy accepted by the staff. Both this, and the activities developed by the team, are seen to have created an atmosphere of fun within the school, and have played a significant role in decreasing the incidence of truancy and misbehaviour, and ultimately making for a safer environment in the school and wider community.

Outcomes for Team Members

Students have developed many skills and attributes in the areas of research, leadership, problem-solving, initiative, and achieving goals. They have increased their understanding of democratic and consultative processes, and of the value of research, and experienced success in establishing a safer environment and in creating opportunities for their peers. They have taken both accreditation and experience from this project.

Sustainability

Because the Student Action Teams have been successful in identifying issues and successfully working to improve the environment and educational opportunities for students, the school has approved the continuation of the Program for 2001. The focus will be to monitor the progress of the Discipline and Welfare Policy, working with the various committees and individuals in the school to ensure its success.

In initial meetings in 2001, it seems that a major project will be on improving the general environment of the school and, in particular, reducing the amount of littering.

Banksia Secondary College

Banksia Secondary College is located in Melbourne's north-eastern suburbs. It is a school of approximately 400 students from years 7 to 12. The school is ethnically diverse. There is an active Student Representative Council of 24 students and the Student Action Team is a sub-group of this Council.

The Issue

The Student Action Team has organised a range of small actions around themes of community safety and connectedness. These have included preventing vandalism of telephone boxes, working with primary schools about bike labelling, developing a handbook on 'Teenagers and Safety' in the City of Banyule, carrying out an investigation into absenteeism, and organising Safety Week activities.

While some of the activities such as Phone Watch - looking after a public telephone - had clear safety connections within their community, others focused more on increasing the awareness of students about safety issues within the school. For example, the team ensured that there were regular Fire Drills, and organised Self Defence classes for Girls. Some of the activities also focused more on notions of 'social safety' or belongingness: eg fostering the notion of successful night entertainment functions both for students and the wider community.

These issues developed from a brainstorm by the Team. In particular, they discussed what was safe and unsafe in their school and community, and what they could do something about. They initially came up with a series of small projects to do with community services and understanding of community (eg helping out with a McHappy Day). In addition, Neighbourhood Watch requested assistance with sponsorship stickers and leaflet distribution, and suggested that the team work with police on marking bikes. Other suggestions included public safety on transport, street and transport lighting (including making recommendations to bus companies), development of oral histories and so on. It was envisaged that a larger team of students would be recruited for some of these activities.

The Team

Four students were chosen by the SRC Coordinator to be on the initial team. Initially the team was going to consist of year 9 students and these were briefed by the City of Banyule Youth Worker; however these students then pulled out of the original training because of school and sporting commitments and an alternative group of four year 8 students, who had shown interest, was chosen at short notice. The Team has close links with the Student Representative Council: the teacher supporting the team also is the SRC support teacher. So two of the initial team members were on the SRC, and the other two were not.

In the second year the Team consisted of four year 8 students who had shown active interest in the Student Action Team but who had not had any experience with the SRC before. The students in the second year were much more enthusiastic, volunteering their time and eager to take on each new project. The four members approached the SRC Coordinator to join the team. Two have since left the school, but the other remain committed and ready to recruit others to the task, now as part of the SRC.

Action

Over the two years, the team organised a range of initiatives, particularly around a Community Safety Week. In order to increase safety awareness around the school and in the community, during this Safety Week and SRC Week:

- Two DART (Discussion, Action, Representation, Thought) Youth Forums were organised in partnerships with the City of Banyule, where over 120 students on each occasion looked at issues like bullying, stalking on the net, graffiti, juvenile crime, health, and safe injecting rooms - and came up with recommendations for action;
- Year 11 and 12 students attended a workshop entitled 'Whole New World' that focused on safety at nightclubs. Peter Sartori, the Youth Worker at the City of Banyule, also spoke to this group about 'Party Link' where a volunteer goes to parties on a Friday/Saturday night and helps promote a drug/alcohol free environment, offering other alternatives such as party games to entertain teenagers;
- Lunchtime activities were organised to raise the profile of the SRC, including live bands, a wrestling demonstration and self-defence classes for girls and female teachers;
- A fire drill was held at the school;
- A no-alcohol and no-smoking dance party was organised; and
- A General Assembly was held with a speaker from the Alannah and Madeleine Foundation, and funds raised for them by selling Buddy Bears.

The Student Action Team was involved in the organisation of the SRC elections and the training afternoon which followed for the newly elected SRC members. The Team was also involved with the organisation of Banksia Festival. This included ethnic food stalls and the organisation of a guest speaker.

In addition, the team began to collect information for, research and develop a practical handbook that teenagers can refer to on issues of safety; and started on a project to identify why students don't attend school regularly in which recommendations were developed to be presented to the College School Council and the Principal. An SRC suggestion box was set up for the Student Action Team, and many ideas came in about issues to be examined.

Outcomes

There is now higher profile of the SAT and the SRC within the school. The involvement of the SAT with the SRC has resulted in a more dynamic and committed group of students who are willing to undertake the responsibility to fundraise, discuss issues related to teenagers and have regular input on College issues. Each year, the SAT/SRC undertake a wider range of activities related to safety in the local community.

The work of the team has resulted in the development of stronger links between the school and the Safer Cities and Shires Program in the City of Banyule. In addition, there now exists a strong foundations for community outreach programs like Neighbourhood Watch.

An increased awareness of safety issues has particularly focused on issues such as the potential problems with Dance Parties, and the importance of having public telephones in good working order.

Outcomes for Team Members

The school recognises that there have been substantial improvements for team members through their involvement in SAT:

- public speaking skills have increased, and this has been evident at in-service days;
- leadership and team-working skills have improved - in organising some of the events;
- there has been increased confidence and self-esteem;

and these changes have transferred to more success at school for team members.

Sustainability

The school is committed to maintaining the principles of the Student Action Team. SAT has become a permanent part of the SRC and has applied for more funding to continue its activities.

Structurally, the school is looking at introducing SAT as a middle school elective. There will be negotiation with the SOSE Faculty for SAT to be recognised within the Civics and Citizenship component of that course.

Three on-going projects are being planned:

- a Safety Handbook for Teenagers;
- an investigation into absenteeism: to identify why students don't attend school regularly; the team will collaborate with level coordinators and agencies to develop recommendations to be presented to the College School Council and the Principal.
- Community Safety Week: the success of the first safety weeks will be consolidated and a range of activities developed that involve local agencies, to increase student awareness of safety in the community.

Euroa Secondary College

Euroa Secondary College is located in the town of Euroa, approximately 150 kilometres north of Melbourne near the Hume Highway, which bypasses the town. The school has 325 students, from town and rural backgrounds. Euroa is located in the Strathbogie Shire, whose main towns are Avenel, Nagambie, Euroa and Violet Town. The population of Strathbogie Shire is approximately 8500 people. Of these, approximately 30% work in agriculture, 11% in manufacturing and 11% in retail areas.

The Issues

In its first year of operation, the Student Action team concentrated on promoting education in the community about the Safety House program. In its second year, this focus shifted to a project around the establishment of a drop-in café in Euroa for teenagers to meet in a safe and friendly environment and the development of a project around the Quit program.

The Safety House program operates to identify and publicise safe neighbourhood houses for primary school students in any threatening situation or time of need eg injury, lost, accosted by an unwelcome person. In

Euroa, the Safety House Committee was struggling for members. The primary school children were generally unaware of the location and purpose of the Safety Houses, and several of the houses were no longer occupied by registered Safety House people. The team identified that the promotion of the program would be valuable.

The team initially discussed and investigated a whole range of ideas including recreation, Neighbourhood Watch, Community Safety Week and the Safety House program. Originally they were keen to work on the development of a skate park in Euroa, but were advised by local youth development workers that this would be a large commitment and that initiatives in this area were happening anyway. In their research, the team found out that local secondary students generally see Euroa and the surrounding towns as being very safe. This project was then seen as being more for younger children than for secondary students.

In 2000, the SAT were concerned about the level of dangerous behaviour of teenagers looking for excitement on weekend evenings - alcohol abuse, vandalism, fights. They were enthusiastic about setting up a Youth Drop In café/games/chat venue in a safe and friendly environment. When this aim became unachievable after some months, the team decided to pursue the idea of educating the primary school students in a Quit program, as they saw early involvement in smoking as another dangerous activity taken up by Euroa youth.

The Team

The Student Action Team was originally selected from year 9 and 10 students who applied in writing. It was hoped that it would be mostly those students who were studying the units of Environmental Studies and Legal Studies who would apply, as it was envisioned that they would be able to work on their SAT project as one of their work requirements for these units. However it eventuated that most of the students interested in SAT were not taking these units, so they used the two periods per week of the Wider/Sport Education unit to get together and work on their project.

In 2000, the invitation to apply for the SAT was, this time, extended primarily to students selecting the Community Studies unit. Unfortunately, there were not enough students wishing to study this unit for it to run, so again the offer was opened to all year 9 and 10 students. Over 20 applied and 10 were accepted for the training with outside consultants. Those who formed the SAT after the training day were 7 girls and 2 boys. As the project to establish a Drop In Café became more frustrating, the numbers dropped to six and this was the final team who continued on to deliver the Quit project.

Training

With a new team in 2000, the students had a training and organisation day with outside consultants. This training day was very successful. A local venue was booked and the students brainstormed on issues of community safety and prioritised areas for their work. They also discussed teamwork and how to plan the steps needed to achieve their goals.

Action

In 1999, the team initially had quite a bit of difficulty identifying a project that they all wished to commit themselves to. There was great difficulty with unity as the single boy in the team felt un-accepted by some of the girls and reacted defensively and then would not reconcile. He attempted to enlist other males, but then gave up and dropped out.

The girls were finally guided to choose one of three projects and they became very inspired by the Safety House education idea. From then on they showed excellent motivation and increasing organisation and independence. They were enthusiastically supported and valued by the local Safety House coordinators. They also had to stay within the strict guidelines of the organisation. They organised their presentations to the two Primary Schools excellently and conducted poster colouring competitions. They gained donations of the prizes for this from the local shops. They also organised the hire and delivery of the Safety House costume from the Melbourne to wear in the Euroa Woolweek street parade, plus T-shirts and balloons for the assistants. In the afternoon, they gave out Safety House helium balloons next to the colouring competition display.

After the training day in 2000, the team had decided on their idea of setting up a Drop In café/games/chat venue for Euroa teenagers. The team liaised with the Shire of Strathbogie youth worker to locate a venue for their café but were not happy with the suggested venue. They were happy with the second offering, but then the plans changed and it was only to be available for one month which made the project impossible. They explored other avenues to find other venues but then the group started to fall apart because of the inaction and frustration.

Some students branched off to consider other possible projects. They decided upon the Quit project and invited the rest of the team to join with them in this new direction. They sent off to the central Quit organisers for information. A huge amount was sent. They then sorted through it, discussed what was most suited for primary school aged children and planned their activities with the principals of both the local primary schools. They visited each school to give a 50-minute Quit presentation to the grades 5 and 6 students. These included a quiz, colouring activities, a short role play and the launching of the poster competition. They were very well received. Again the team approached the local businesses and received donations for the prizes, including a grand new scooter for first prize.

Outcomes

Both teams achieved increased community awareness for the programs they were promoting. They also reinforced the links between the primary and secondary schools which is most important in our small community. They provided role models to the younger children of attitudes towards independence and wise decision making. By informing themselves of the issues involved in the Safety House and Quit programs, they became more aware of the ways community members contribute to the welfare of the other members of their community, and take on joint responsibility for the young. They also became more informed of the issues for their own personal decisions on smoking.

Outcomes for Team Students

All members of the 1999 and 2000 SATs showed marked development of teamwork and leadership skills. They became more tolerant of each other and more confident in dealing with community leaders and other official personnel.

Sustainability

At this stage, it is not sure whether there will be a future SAT at Euroa Secondary College. The Wider/Sports Education program no longer provides two periods for the team to work in. It will be offered again as part of the Community Studies unit in 2002.

Heatherhill Secondary College

Established in 1966, Heatherhill Secondary College is situated in Springvale South, a suburb of Melbourne. A years 7 to 12 co-educational school, the college services a well-established residential area that is culturally diverse. This diversity is reflected in the multi-cultural nature of the student population. In 2000 the college had an enrolment of 549 students, of which more than half come from a non-English speaking background. There are at least 32 different language groups represented within the college.

The Issues

The original Student Action Team developed as a focal point within a cluster of neighbouring secondary colleges. It conducted similar leadership training approaches with student teams in these colleges. In its first year, the SAT also conducted youth forums in the area in consultation with police and other agencies.

In the subsequent years, drawing upon earlier investigations in the school, the SAT developed projects that addressed the College's charter priority of "improving health and well-being of the College community". SAT students continued to work in conjunction with emergency services such as the police and the fire brigade and other community agencies to produce displays and workshops to highlight:

- support services that are available to minority groups (refugees) within their community
- issues of concern within their community (death of two children in a house fire)
- strategies that parents could use to assist them when communicating with their teenage kids.

The Team

At the beginning of 1999, Heatherhill started the SAT with four students who attended the initial training. These students then went on to train five further Year 10 students and four Year 9 Victoria Youth Development Program: Police Youth Corps students. Eventually there were 20 Year 10 students actively involved in SAT projects. The SAT students become members of the College's SRC team and also participated in the College's Community Relations team (which previously had consisted of staff and parents only).

Students were given credit via comments on the cover of their reports, by presentation of a certificate for their participation on the awards night at the end of the year.

The College teacher selected the initial four students nominated for membership of the SAT, in order to ensure that different groups were represented. There was a mixture of boys and girls, but finally more girls became involved in the projects.

In its second year, the 20 Year 10 students chose to continue their involvement in SAT activities.

Action

Initially, the SAT conducted a similar two-day training event for four other nearby schools, using the same format as the original Red Cross training. The schools were selected on the basis that they were 'Connect Project' members and had a close working relationship with the College. This training was held at the council chambers, and was launched by the CEO and with the Assistant General Manager of Southern Region and senior police in attendance. A member of the SAT team gave the welcome address.

The training covered SAT aims, how the Victorian Youth Development Program – Police Youth Corps could be connected to SAT, empowerment of youth and developing skills that would allow them to become involved in the decision making process.

Further training occurred again later in the year and students continued to meet to share ideas, difficulties and strategies on how to overcome difficulties. A further 34 extra students were trained in this second round.

In the second and third year of the SAT Program, students worked on the following projects: uniform, canteen food, refugee week, community safety week, fire safety awareness.

In the second year, the focus on services available to refugees resulted in a display being set up (in conjunction with local fire brigade, police and community agencies) at the Springvale Shopping Centre.

In the third year, the focus on home fires and safety resulted in a display being set up (in conjunction with local fire brigade and police) at the Springvale Shopping Centre. In this year, there was further participation with the Victoria Police Youth Corps participants, assisted by the SAT coordinator being responsible for both areas. There was a SAT two-day training workshop at the beginning of the year.

The team organised a Youth Reach Forum (in a co-project with Springvale Police). This forum was attended, over the two days, by approximately twelve hundred Year 9 and 10 students.

As well as the Fire Safety Awareness, the group developed a workshop manual for a Parent Forum addressing inter-generational communication and drug issues (identification of problem and where can parents go for help).

Students were also able to produce displays that outlined safely at home and this was used during Community Safety Week as part of The City of Greater Dandenong's Community Safety Project for 'Secure Senior Citizens'.

Students have been involved in fundraising activities for the school and for the community and have undertaken an enormous amount of community service. For example they along with the College's Police Youth Corps and CFA Youth Crew students they restored the chairs of a local kindergarten.

Students were given the opportunity to participate in out of school hours workshops, that focused on skills such as self defence, first aid, setting up visual displays, conducting effective meetings, time-management, introducing guest speakers, using a microphone effectively, running assemblies.

Outcomes

Participation in the SAT Program has brought about closer links and co-operation/participation between the school and the City of Greater Dandenong, local community groups, police and fire brigade. It has improved liaison with neighbouring schools and enhanced participation in school and community.

Outcomes for Team Students

Members of the SAT have increased their skills in leadership, negotiation, teamwork and communication. Many of the skills gained within the team will be extremely useful in school, part-time jobs, in their future endeavours and as community leaders.

The team has worked very closely together, including during school holidays and on weekends. Teachers and students have commented on the personal growth and improved personal skills of the students involved. They are more mature, with improved interpersonal discussions, greater openness and increased ideas when meeting as a team. There has been enhanced self-esteem of students and a greater 'connectedness' to the staff involved and the college.

Sustainability

At the beginning of each school year students from years 7 to 11 are given the opportunity to participate in the program. This year for the first time SAT and SRC have become one and are known as SAT. At their first meeting for the year the meeting was conducted by a teacher. Students were informed that that would be the first and only meeting that would be facilitated by a staff member. At this meeting the purpose/aim of the team was established and students were to identify issues that they wished to be involved in. At the meeting the composition of the team was also discussed. Equal student/year level representation was also discussed. As the role of the SRC and SAT is the same, the two have been amalgamated. Therefore it was decided that representation on the executive committee should be equal and a true representation of the college student population. It was decided that the executive committee should not be too large – 12 students, two from each year level. It was also decided that each of these students had to assign themselves to an issue that they had to resolve. To resolve the issue they have to develop their own teams. Students are enthusiastic and attend all meetings were they keep their own minutes, develop their own agendas and seek staff support when they need it.

It should be noted that, at the initial meeting, the role of staff within the SAT is outlined and stressed (staff can only take on the role of a mentor/guide/support and not that of a 'leader'). Student participation in the decision making process is extremely valuable to the college and every endeavour is undertaken to encourage and provide students with opportunities that increase their participation in the above process.

Karingal Park Secondary College

Karingal Park Secondary College is the largest single-campus state secondary college in Victoria, with over 1700 students. It is located in the Frankston area, drawing students from 30 different primary schools.

The Issues

The focus of the Student Action Team was on increasing the safety of students and others in the light of specific local issues. Initially, in its first year, this work focused around a specific track near the school, where there had been some major incidents, including the murder of Natalie Russell; the team then moved on, in the second year, to build awareness of the dangers of behaviour and alternatives to what students perceive as the appropriate or expected behaviour during 'muckup' time.

These issues were aimed at:

- increasing students feeling of safety near the school;
- helping to prevent deaths and/or injuries;
- avoiding thoughtless behaviour that is threatening to the community;
- inspiring young people to seek alternative entertainment;
- offering and educating young people about the resources available to them.

The first issue was to improve the safety of a pathway that is an access route to the school, on which a girl, Natalie Russell, had been recently murdered. Since then students had not felt safe using it.

In the second year, a community safety issue came to the attention of students: the behaviour of students, particularly year 12, during the end-of-school-year period. A student from a neighbouring college died and two others were seriously injured when they were drink driving, without a licence, after a year 12 party. It was recognised that this time of year makes many in the school and wider community feel unsafe, and concerned for their physical and psychological well-being. In addition, there was concern about student attitudes to and involvement in drinking, driving, drugs, suicide, and their self-esteem.

The team wanted to make students aware of dangers, and to educate them about their options. They wanted to alter attitudes for the better.

Both these issues were chosen as part of the considerations of the community safety group that is part of the College's Student Leadership Council (SLC).

The Team

The SLC involves a broad cross-section of the student population, not just academic students. To join it, students write a short nomination and the whole school year level votes. SLC students attend a camp at the beginning of each year, at which priorities for the year's work are set. A community safety sub-committee of the SLC was set up at this camp. Students initially self selected onto the SLC sub committee because of their interest. The community safety sub-group consisted of seven students from different year levels (7 to 11). More older students became involved as the younger ones needed guidance, better organisational and public speaking skills.

In its second year, the team involved 12 students, both boys and girls, from years 7 to 12. It is planned that, in the future, the SAT would involve three SLC members to act as a Steering Committee, plus 6-8 members from general school populace, selected through interview.

Action

In tackling the issue of the track near the school in its first year, the team interviewed people in the school about the track, to find out what they wanted. They met with the principal, developed realistic action plans, and the senior students also met with junior students. They also met with the local Council and Police to form a committee to ensure action was taken.

Ultimately, the track was resurfaced and graded, fences were fixed by the golf clubs on either side of the track, and trees and bushes were cut back to allow visibility for track users. A 'lollipop' man was contracted for the relevant school traffic period, as visibility was impeded by a huge hump in the middle of the track where the city's gas supply pipe was located. A memorial stone seat and bollard were installed at the Skye Road end of the track, and all were unveiled at a memorial for the sixth anniversary of the death of Natalie Russell.

In the second year, the Karingal Park Secondary College SAT decided to address the issue of the dangers to young people of drink-driving, partying and drugs etc particularly at the end of the school year. A forum of students to look at the issue was proposed. The SAT tried to enlist the help of a neighbouring non-government college, which had experienced a student death during 'muck-up' time at the end of year 12 but, after conducting a meeting with them, it was decided that the forum proposal was inappropriate at that time for them.

The forum - Driving for Life - then proceeded for Karingal's Year 11 and 12 students, and involved speakers from VicRoads, TAC, SES, victims of accidents and so on, talking about safe driving. In addition, the forum led to the College's 'Arthurs Seat Challenge': the Student Action Team helped to organise a fun run to raise money to support a program by VicRoads called 'Keys Please'. These funds support a program to help parents learn how to teach their kids to drive, pay for driving lessons for those unable to afford them, and provide an advanced skills driving course for P-plate drivers.

Outcomes

There have been several positive community outcomes. Where people were afraid to use the track where Natalie Russell died, students and community members now feel safer, and use it more frequently. The track has been resurfaced, a memorial is in place, there has been liaison between the golf clubs, council, police, schools etc.

From the second year, year 11 and 12 students were taught to drive safely. There were no crashes during that year. Also, there was positive feedback and attitudes from the year 11 and 12 students, and an increased awareness of the importance of driving safely.

Over all this, a positive outcome has been seeing young people have success and having their efforts appreciated and rewarded by the community.

Outcomes for Team Students

The students on the SAT feel that they have worked well together. There has been improvement in their public speaking skills, their confidence, initiative, self-esteem, and ability to verbalise and present ideas. Their increased confidence has been shown in interviews on radio and TV, in their acceptance of awards, and in their ability to make speeches. They are able to address a variety of people and circumstances appropriately.

The strengths of those students who were 'team workers' is more obvious, while some others dropped out of the team totally through lack of confidence. The project has enhanced their leadership skills, both as an individual and as a team leader. Practically, they have learnt how to write press releases and formal letters, how to approach people personally, and give input at meetings (eg with local council).

Members of the team seem more aware of the breadth of community issues and of how much is included. They are more aware that they have power, will be listened to, and have their ideas considered and acted on. They are important members of community who have some control over their environment.

SAT members received a report specifically relating to their performance on the project. There was further recognition through assemblies and media.

Sustainability

The SAT Program will continue through the work of the Student Leadership Council, hopefully through the formation of a formal sub-committee. It is likely that the team will do some work around environmental and/or social issues.

Through recent negotiations with local police and Frankston Council, the students have decided to focus on improvements in the safety of a park adjacent to the College - Worland Park. The park is traversed by many students daily and is a concern because it is the site of drug deals, loiterers etc. The students will survey the situation and work with police and council to implement safety reforms.

Funding can be acquired through the remaining SAT funds, SLC funds and perhaps, as has been the case before, funding from the Council.

Kyneton Secondary College

Kyneton Secondary College is located at Kyneton in the Macedon Ranges Shire, 86 kilometres north west of Melbourne. The school has approximately 750 students, drawn from Kyneton and the surrounding areas of Lancefield, Romsey, Woodend, Malmsbury and Taradale.

The Issues

The Student Action Team at Kyneton Secondary College worked for two years on the development of a Skate Park for the area. The student team was engaged in fund-raising and negotiating to help develop skateboarding facilities in the Kyneton community. This involved developing links with the local community, drawing up plans, running a skate competition to raise public awareness, and promoting a more positive image in the community.

This topic was chosen because of boredom in the town; also many local young people skate. The group argued that having a skate park would allow the community to develop an area for young people to socialise and participate in active recreation (away from organised clubs). The process of developing the skate park would also empower young people to contribute positively to their local area.

A group of students were interested in getting a skate park in Kyneton. There had been discussion amongst this group of young people for several years. For example, in 1997-1998, various groups of young people were using the Primary School site for skating and they then wanted an area of their own.

This issue identified the team.

The Team

In 1999, team members were drawn from students in years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Approximately 10 to 15 students formed the team. Most team members were male, but a number of female students helped them and worked with them. The students were seen as marginalised within the school and the broader community. Equally, the students said that "some teachers target us" and that they were "treated like dregs".

Two students from the original training group (year 10 boys) found employment and left school. As meetings went on, more and more students became interested and wanted to join in with the team. During the first year, the team varied between 12 and 20 students from Years 7 to 11, and were meeting each week.

There have been fourteen students on the team in 2000 from years 7, 8, 9 and 11.

Action

Throughout 1999, the team worked on issues surrounding the establishment of a Skate Park. In November, a very successful Skate Competition was held, involving over 200 participants and spectators. The feedback from the community on this program was very successful, and this support assisted in the achievement of a $40,000 grant to the Macedon Ranges Shire from the Department of Sport and Recreation for skate parks at Lancefield, Woodend, Gisborne and Kyneton. The SAT students met with the Minister for Sport and Recreation when the funding was announced.

The Sport and Recreation grant and the support given by the Macedon Ranges Youth Worker were two critical factors in moving the project forward. The Youth Worker met regular with the SAT team and was able to take their views back to Council and incorporate them in the planning of the facility.

The team then began meeting outside of schooltime to involve others from the community in the design and building of the Skate Park.

The team had a planning session each week. This was done by withdrawal of students from classes. The team also discussed the project a great deal informally.

To support the work of the SAT, the school then established a Red Cross Community Action elective at Year 9. This was designed so that young people can participate in local organisations and thus raise the profile of young people in the community.

The group continued meeting in the second year, planning the achievement of the skate park and an opening competition.

Outcomes

The greatest achievement of the Student Action Team has been in actually getting the skate park to happen - and successfully raising the money for it. The Council has put land aside for the building of the Park.

Within this, there was increased awareness by the local Council of the need for a skate park in Kyneton and surrounding areas, where young people could socialise.

The conduct of the skate competition with over 200 people participating and/or viewing was a highlight. The ability of these young people to organise and run a successful event is a great achievement which boosted their self-esteem. The project built links between 'students at risk' and the broader school community, improved and built on relationships with 'students at risk' generally, and showed that 'students at risk' can involve themselves in and run something for the local community.

Outcomes for Team Students

At the end of the Skate Competition, students from the team felt a great sense of pride and achievement. Some of the students have become more trustful of some adults at the school. Communication skills have been improved and some students are using the work they do as part of course work eg photographs. The team has shown a great deal of commitment to the project and a high degree of persistence. However, staff at the school recognise that there is still a way to go.

Sustainability

The existing SAT group will continue meeting to ensure that the skate park is achieved and that there's an opening competition. Other issues will be explored, such as a waterproof shade area.

Melton Secondary College

Melton Secondary College is located in the western urban fringe of the Melbourne metropolitan area which is one of the most rapidly growing areas in the State. Melton is situated 40 kilometres from Melbourne and is largely a 'dormitory suburb', with most people travelling into Melbourne for work. The school consists of 1190 students from years 7 to 12. It has a strong history of participation in activities similar to the SAT, and was represented by its principal on the Program Reference Group.

The Issues

The Student Action Team at Melton Secondary College had a strong and continuing focus on youth safety in Melton. The team worked closely with the local Safer Cities and Shires Project to survey students about perceptions of safe and unsafe areas.

This work continued into the Program's second year, with an emphasis on action around one particular area that students had identified as being unsafe. The team carried out a site visit to the main area identified as youth unfriendly, developed a Community Learning Project that focused on recommendations for improvements to the area, and submitted a report and list of recommendations to the Shire.

The issue arose from a brainstorming meeting with the local Project Officer for the Safer Cities and Shires Program. A priority for establishing links with what else was happening locally was established. The team also met with a worker from Melton Youth Access and the local Shire's Youth Development Officer.

The Team

Four students from years 9 and 10 formed the SAT. They were chosen by teachers with gender balance in mind, and as people who think and ask. It was also decided to have older students, as it was considered that the language in project and training manuals would have been too sophisticated for younger students. However, other students were invited to suggest ways of improving the area once the unsafe area had been identified.

In the second year, a team consisting of six students from year 9 was formed after students were alerted to the project and were invited to participate. They were recommended by their year 8 teachers, and were invited to submit a written application, followed by an interview. The six were chosen largely on the basis of their understanding of what was required to be a team member. These students attended the first student leadership course held at the Alpine School at Dinner Plains, where the project was more clearly defined and further strengthened by the time dedicated to it as a Community Learning Project.

Training

In the second year, the six members of the Student Action Team were chosen to attend the first Alpine School, at which training was provided in leadership, team work and project organisation. This also allowed time for the group to work on their local safety project during an intensive 5-week period. A Community Learning Project (CLP) is a focus of the training provided at the Alpine School. The activities there helped the SAT to work as a group and also showed them how to use Edward De Bono's 6 Thinking Hats to tackle different ideas from different angles.

Action

After meeting with the local Safer Cities and Shires Program Officer and discussing youth safety in Melton, the SAT prepared a survey using the Safer Cities and Shires Survey as a base. They conducted school-based survey: about public spaces and safety; re-wording the community survey and applying it to young people in years 7 to 12. As part of the process, they developed a test survey; and sampled a form group at each year level. The survey also included a map for visual purposes.

This survey from 1999, and student and local resident complaints indicated that there were severe problems. So, in the second year, the team worked with the Shire to fix one very dangerous street where there were reports of drugs, alcohol, violence and harassment. Information was gathered from a number of surveys completed by senior students at the school and surveys completed by the business owners in the area. Recommendations for improving the street were put to the Shire Council. These included blue lights in the toilets to prevent drug use, speed humps on the road outside a night-club, and public telephones to be available in the street. A site visit prior to attending the Alpine School enabled students to take photos with a digital camera, and for some 'mapping' of the area.

At the end of their time at the Alpine School the team put their work together as a Powerpoint display presentation for the Principal and staff at the school. When they returned to the school, they repeated the presentation to the staff, and to the Shire Project Officer, and consulted with the Shire in planning the next steps.

Outcomes

Recommendations have been put to the Shire and acknowledged in the Shire's Corporate Safety Plan.

The SAT were then considering extending the community safety program and developing a safety project focusing on the area around the local railway station.

Outcomes for Team Students

Teachers report evidence of improved drafting and writing skills through participation in the survey process. In addition, communication skills have been improved in reporting to the school eg via School Assemblies, full staff meeting and to the Shire's Chief Commissioner. Presentation skills were developed and applied through Powerpoint presentations to and discussions with a range of audiences: students, teachers and administrators. Improved levels of students' self confidence were observed by teachers.

Sustainability

The Melton Secondary College SAT aims to continue with new members, perhaps including some year 7 and 8 students. The focus of the project may also change, but community safety will continue to be a theme, as will the work with the Shire. The team will also seek to involve students from other nearby schools. It is proposed that SAT research processes will be included in other subject areas.

Ovens Secondary College

Ovens Secondary College is located in Wangaratta, approximately 230 kilometres north-east of Melbourne. The school has approximately 420 students.

The Issues

The Student Action Team coordinated a larger group of students on a range of community-based activities which provided them with opportunities to develop skills in leadership, citizenship, communication, organisation and maintaining commitment, and provide opportunities for students to contribute to the local community through links with service agencies and local government.

In the first year, the team organised a 'Spring Into Health' Health Issues Expo, for local youth health providers, and which involved year 9 and 10 students from two local secondary colleges. This Expo included guest speakers, drama/theatre studies, stall holders eg YMCA, nutritionist etc, a survey and prizes. A Council youth worker was also involved initially, as he was starting a Junior Council and the SAT was seen to be related to this.

At the start of the process, the team spent some time coming up with ideas and discussing these. Another local secondary college had had a Youth Health Expo earlier in the year, organised by a local Rural Development Project Officer, and the SAT members thought this would be a good idea to have for their school.

In the second year, the Ovens SAT focused on developing rural pride. This included developing a community mural at the railway station, with various schools each doing a section. Some students also visited the primary school to help out with lunchtime activities. These projects had already been chosen by the school, and students were allocated to whichever work group suited them best. The school argued that increasing students' knowledge of and involvement with a range of recreational and health services in community provides a powerful boost to their social safety.

The Team

The SAT initially consisted of four students, three females and one male, from years 9 and 10. All were capable students who were involved in a number of activities within the school community. One student lost interest because of other commitments, and another had disputes with other members of the group and left. Attempts were made to recruit other students to the team, but without success.

In the second year, the team was re-formed with 15 students from years 9 and 10. Nine of these worked on the mural. The remainder (with further student support) ran lunchtime activities at a nearby primary school. A small group opted to fundraise for Typo Station (a group that supports young men with problems).

Training

In the second year, twenty-two students volunteered to take part in a one-day SAT training. This was held out of the school and utilised non-school trainers. Responses were generally positive, although the group included some less committed students. Those students did not continue their involvement. The group who went to the primary school received further training appropriate to their needs.

Action

To develop the Health Expo, the SAT approached the Rural Development Project Officer for support. The Expo was jointly organised with another local secondary college and involves students from both schools.

In the second year, three separate projects developed under the 'rural pride' heading:

- One team of five students designed and created a mural which formed part of a patchwork of murals from all schools in the district. The murals were coordinated by a local community group in a project called Rural Pride and were displayed at the local railway station. The students spent two periods a week on the project throughout Term 3. They also enlisted the support of other helpers including a SAT member from 1999.
- Another team was formed to fund-raise in support of Typo Station, an organisation that provides residential programs for young men at risk. The team interviewed a Typo staff member, but other constraints meant that the actual project was then put on hold for a new team to take on this project.
- A nearby primary school asked for help with lunchtime activities, and a group of middle school students volunteered to take this on. The team included SAT members and received accolades for their efforts.

During Term 4, another project commenced, organising a range of activities to be implemented in the school to improve tolerance of difference. A Reconciliation project, which involved some SAT members, prepared the groundwork for this.

Outcomes

The mural was finished and un-veiled and this has cheered up the railway station. The students involved in this component were pleased with their effort and felt they had achieved a major goal in completing the mural the way they designed it.

Students who worked at the primary school were very positive about the relationships built up there and provided valuable suggestions for the modification of the Program in 2001. Ovens College has been invited to send students again, and the project is likely to extend to another primary school. Students in this group learned to be flexible when projects had to be changed.

The program demonstrated a way in which SAT activities could be incorporated into the year 9 and 10 curriculum.

Outcomes for Team Students

There were improvements noted in friendship, cooperation, a sense of ownership and of the importance of the project. Teachers point to increased responsibility and communication with others. Students also indicate that they have developed self-confidence and useful skills in leadership, meeting new people, communication and project organisation.

The whole group learned how important the idea of community is; 'mural students' also improved their art skills. Students going to the primary school learnt about organisation and modelling responsible behaviour.

Sustainability

It is intended that the SAT process will continue. New Year 9 and 10 students will be assisted by experienced year 10 students to start projects with a similar focus.

Students will receive credit for their work through the Student Profile completed and presented to students at the end of the year.

Princes Hill Secondary College

Princes Hill Secondary College is located in North Carlton. It has a population of 825 students, largely from the inner northern city, but also drawing from the wider metropolitan area out to Epping and the western suburbs.

The Issues

The Student Action Team at Princes Hill Secondary College has worked around issues of 'social safety' or community belongingness. This has included work around inter-generational relationships, where the student team conducted activities at a neighbouring old people's home to improve the perceptions and image of young people in the local community; around inter-school networking, with both secondary and primary schools in the area; around discussions with the police; and around projects run by students within the school.

These issues were chosen to improve the perception of young people in the community; by establishing improved relationships and image, the experience of community safety will increase.

That attention to 'social safety' also means the creation of a greater sense of community within a school, and the enhancement of self-esteem through community involvement or engagement in community action.

Four members from the school's middle and junior Student Forum (its SRC) went to the initial training. From this, they decided on the project. In publicising this around the school, principally through Student Forum, other students joined the group and up to 20 became apart of the project. In choosing the issue related to the old people's home, its closeness to the school was also a factor.

The Team

Initially, the SAT was open for any students to join. A large group of up to 20 students was involved in various ways.

Of the original four students in the training program, only one remained at the end of the first year, with the positions of those leaving being taken by other students from the wider group. This wider group remained involved throughout the first year, with up to 40 more being involved from time to time. Of the students who left, one shifted school, while the other two simply lost interest in seeing through the projects.

In the second year, the team consisted of students from years 7, 8 and 9. There was a SAT executive of five students and links with the Junior, Middle school and VCE forums (SRC). While the executive organised the projects and events, many students from Forums (SRCs) became involved in the actual running of the projects. The group remained very stable through the second year, and maintained their strong interest.

Action

The SAT established a relationship between the College and a local residential village for the elderly. About twenty students met several times with residents for chats, concerts, quiz afternoons, oral interviews and histories.

Other projects around the school were initiated by the SAT: a school mural was completed by 'disengaged' students, a disco for year 7 and 8 students was organised, and a lunchtime radio was established by students.

Under the 'Social Safety' theme in the second year, various links and channels of communication were developed with local organisations. Each term, the SAT group focused on a different organisation:

> *Term 1: the Local Police:* Three police officers visited the school and conducted a forum with 30 students from Years 7 to 10. Questions were prepared in advance and sent to the police prior to the meeting.
>
> *Term 2: An inter-school forum with two other local Secondary Colleges:* The topic was student action in SRCs and cooperative group work.
>
> *Term 3: The students themselves conducted an inter-school forum for neighbouring primary schools.* The SAT members were trained to be facilitators and plan a program. The students ran the forum almost completely independently, for 30 primary school students from three local schools.
>
> *Term 4: The team again connected up with Princes Hill Village, the residence for elderly people near the school.* The program was similar to that in the first year.

The group also organised a disco for years 7 and 8 students, and organised the teaching of dances to the students to encourage participation (after a low participation in a similar activity in 1999).

Outcomes

There has been an awakening of a sense of community responsibility and enthusiasm within the school. The work of the team seems to have tapped into an area of students' interest that isn't really reflected elsewhere in the school. The work of the team has also boosted involvement in Student Forums (SRCs).

Outcomes for Team Members

The following outcomes have been identified by teachers and students:

- learning about teamwork;
- fairness in communication;
- improvement of oral skills in public speaking and presentations;
- improvement of verbal and social skills in communication with elderly people;
- skills associated with interviewing and writing of oral histories;
- growth in confidence in social situations;
- improved leadership skills;
- skills of organising and managing - including conferences and meetings.

The team identifies that they have learnt a lot about realistically developing projects, about the operation of meetings and about generating positive energy in the face of negativity. It has 'allowed' students to be positive and involved in activities beyond the classroom and beyond their peer group.

Sustainability

New SAT members will be recruited so that year 7 to 10 are represented. Similar projects to those operating in 2000 will be run: primary school forums, a Police forum, visits to Princes Hill Village.

Credit for SAT activities will be pursued through SOSE/English as a component of communications project and student leadership certification by the school.

Wanganui Park Secondary College

Wanganui Park Secondary College is located on the outer perimeter of Shepparton in North-East Victoria. It has a population of 980 students, with a small Indigenous student population and refugee group (mainly Iraqi students) in the school.

The school has a 'Student Forum', formed from one student elected from each home group. This Forum meets on a regular basis, and is involved in a range of activities including fundraising, organising student activities and electing student representatives to the School Council. The school's response to 'student at risk' is through its Vertical Modular Grouping (VMG) curriculum and home group structure. Home groups each consist of approximately 30 students across years 7 – 12, and two teachers, and meet twice daily. In addition, there are two weekly home group sessions for 25 minutes prior to lunch. The school also runs other projects such as 'Boys Talk' and Peer Mediation. These projects are designed to promote student support and understanding. Home group teachers monitor students closely and assist with counselling, advice and progress in a number of areas.

The Issues

Over the two years of its operation, the Student Action Team at Wanganui Park Secondary College explored and acted on several issues. These included action around Reconciliation Week, on Trauma Teddies, and on the image of a particular estate near the school.

When the Student Action Team and its mentors returned from the initial training in 1999, the first concerns identified by the mentors were about lunchtimes. They thought the project could look at conducting lunchtime activities. On the other hand, the team decided that a major issue in the school was multiculturalism and the lack of recognition or acceptance between many different cultures. The school wrote, at this stage: "One of the aims of SAT is to provide opportunities for all our students to work together on various initiatives to help make the school a more inclusive place for all students". This is an issue not only in their school but also the wider community. Two particular target groups were: Aboriginal and Iraq students. This project was later redefined to concentrate on Reconciliation Week, though a luncheon was also organised with refugee Iraqi students to make them feel welcome.

The school endeavoured to undertake activities that forged stronger links between the school and its community. The SAT projects were then chosen to require strong links with the community and to give students access to networks outside of the school.

In 2000, the SAT continued to work with the local Community House. The issue, which gained considerable support, was a positive project to improve the image of the area and the reclaiming of the international village which was located near the school.

The Team

The Vice-Principal read about Student Action Teams and then, together with the co-ordinating teacher, decided to apply for the Program. The school was already working closely with Red Cross in the establishment of the Student Community Involvement Program (SCIP - now called Red Cross Community Challenge), and discussed the SAT Program option with Red Cross staff.

Initially four Year 10 students were invited to be part of the SAT. Two of these students were elected from the Student Forum and two recruited by the mentors. Teachers chose the particular students because of their long term leadership potential. Year 10 students were targeted in order to enable new students to take on leadership roles in the school, and in order to ensure that the influence of the Program and the students would be on-going.

The same four students and two teachers continued throughout the Program's first year. Two of the students showed more enthusiasm than the others, however, and made the greatest contribution.

In the second year, the team continued to involve a core of four students, with six extra students helping at times and on specific activities. These were mainly year 10 and 11 students. Some continued from the first year (another of this original team left school for work), and there were some new students, with the Student Forum appointing some representatives again. One of the continuing students had an initial strong involvement in Civics and Citizenship areas, then moved into the Student Forum and subsequently to the SAT. Another student was initially involved in a 'Newsmakers Unit' with *Shepparton News*, involving newspaper production.

Action

In its first year, the Student Action Team organised activities with Iraqi refugee students who were new to the school, having started at the college in the last 6 months. These refugees had minimal English. The SAT organised lunchtime activities and made contact with their families to help ease the transition into the school community.

The SAT also worked with Aboriginal students to plan and conduct activities during Reconciliation Week. In addition, the SAT worked with Neighbourhood Watch and the Shepparton Police to knit Trauma Teddies (for road accident victims) and assisted with a Republican referendum in the school.

The group then identified, for the second year, a project on BMX riding. A local BMX track was vandalised regularly and many riders do not want to use it. The Council was trying to stop riders from making their own courses and jumps along the banks of the river. It was planned that the students in the team would act as a source of information for the Council and the Police ie gather information about attitudes, usage, preferences etc. To do this, the students would develop skills in setting questionnaires, interviewing, writing a report based on findings, presenting this to an audience and so on.

However, a different issued emerged from local publicity. The Parkside Gardens area (near the school) has a poor local image, with the local paper running a front-page story calling it a ‘ghetto’. Resident groups were trying to address issues about the image and safety of the area, and the Student Action Team made a decision to get involved. So the Wanganui Student Action Team conducted a **Parkside Gardens Community Walk** each week over a four-week period, at lunchtimes. The walk was run in conjunction with the North Shepparton Community House and had, as one of its aims, the forging of stronger links between the school and its community.

The walks aimed to:

- heighten community morale and involvement;
- improve public perceptions of the Parkside Gardens community;
- forge stronger links between the school and community;
- encourage regular exercise amongst participants;
- provide leadership and organisational opportunities for students at Wanganui Park Secondary College.

Students, staff, parents and community members walked as part teams. 109 members of the community registered to walk, with prizes being given to the fastest walkers, to teams and to individuals.

Finally the SAT put together a Christmas Hamper to give to needy families. Donations were obtained from students and local businesses.

Outcomes

There was active participation in a range of projects from students in years 7 to 12, as well as teachers and community members. The students were highly motivated and achieved significant community development. The team also built trust and shared involvement.

The school has established a very positive relationship with the Community House through the SAT project. There are opportunities for greater cooperation between the two groups in the future.

Outcomes for Team Students

The SAT wavered in its enthusiasm and commitment, and thus some members achieved more than others. Two of the enthusiastic members further developed their organisational and communication skills, and one became a significant team leader and went on to win the Education Trust Leadership Award.

Students developed and applied leadership skills. They developed strong organisation and teamwork skills.

Sustainability

In 2001, the support teacher will take up a Teacher Release to Industry Program (TRIP) position with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. She is able to continue her involvement with SAT approaches from this position. Students will be doing a Farm Safety project, involving secondary students visiting local rural primary schools and delivering lessons to students on farm safety.

Weeroona College is a P to 10 college in Bendigo, the third largest city in Victoria. The college has approximately 140 primary school students and 650 secondary school students; a large number of students are rural/farm dwellers, many of whom travel long distances by bus to attend school, while others are suburban dwellers who live in the local neighbourhood.

The Issues

The Student Action Team at Weeroona College has focused on driver education for young people. In its first year, the team developed a video to advertise a course for skilling young people for driving in adverse country conditions. They participated in a community-based Road Safety campaign called Operation DEFY (Driver Education for Youth) which aimed to help reduce the high road toll of young people. This enabled students to actively participate in planning and decision-making processes within the local community.

The focus issue for Weeroona began with the death of four students in a car accident in Bendigo. This affected most students at the school, and students wanted to follow up on the need for young people to have improved 'country' driving skills. This was entirely the students' initiative.

This topic had a clear community safety focus. It meant being able to travel in the area as they liked, without fear. It also built on a range of other community-based activities for the school: as well as DEFY, there were links with the Safe City Forum, with Meals on Wheels, the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, Bendigo Tourism, the Bendigo 'Connect' Program, the Catholic Church, Rotary, the Botanical Gardens- Growing Together Propagation, an Enterprise and Education Project, the development of the Web Page Project with local small businesses, and the Global Classroom project.

The Student Action Team project began with attendance by students and teachers at Safer Cities and Shires meetings in Bendigo. These Safer City Forums had alerted students to more local safety issues. All were affected by the deaths of the young people - some were students and ex-students, and newspaper reports about DEFY being started by parents of these young people meant that some students started attending DEFY meetings.

The Team

In 1999, there were four year 9 students on the team, supported by the Student Welfare Coordinator and the SRC support teacher. The four students were selected by these teachers, keeping in mind the need for a gender balance, for obvious student leaders, those capable of completing the project, students who would "speak their own mind", but who were not necessarily the 'best students' in the school. The two staff members talked to a lot of other teachers in making these choices. In addition, one further girl from Flora Hill Secondary College and one from the Catholic College (both daughters of the team facilitators) were chosen to increase the team size.

In 2000, the 1999 SAT formed a core group to attend Operation DEFY meetings. This core group, of Year 10 students, continued to be involved with DEFY which now has a youth forum with representatives from each of the secondary colleges in Bendigo.

Action

In the first year, the Weeroona Student Action Team worked in various ways around Operation Defy:

- A youth forum with representatives from each of the secondary colleges in Bendigo has been set up. This group regularly organises full-day 'Learn to Drive' courses at a temporary driver-training course. They also organise fund-raising activities to subsidise these courses to make them affordable for young people.
- Students organised a concert with rock bands made up of students and former students of this College. Students were asked to make a gold coin donation to 'Operation Defy' and raffle tickets were sold to win the privilege of shaving the head of one of our Maths teachers. This initiative raised $901 for 'Operation Defy'
- Road safety for young drivers was organised through an advanced driving skills course.

In its second year, the project continued its focus on Road Safety through Operation DEFY. Representatives from the SAT were involved in the Youth Forum section of DEFY, arranged for College students to provide music for a fundraising Pool Party for Operation DEFY, and continued to be involved with various fundraising schemes to enable the DEFY Track and Education Centre to be constructed. In semester 2, a year 10 Student Action and Leadership elective was set up. It was modelled on the Red Cross Challenge, which includes a mix of classroom activities focusing on problem-solving, team-building and community service activities such as Meals on Wheels. Students were responsible for the construction of a mobile bill-board promoting a Road Safety message. Part of the task involved researching the effectiveness of other road safety campaigns, contact with a number of local agencies, researching the size and type of font, and planning the most effective placement of the mobile billboard. The aim of this project was to have a positive impact on youth road safety, building on the successes of the local 'Operation Defy' project.

Other projects and activities which the SAT was involved in organising were:

- Sports Focus – and Expo for year 8 students;
- Manufacturing Careers Expo;
- Energy Breakthrough Display;
- Year 10 Valedictory Dinner;
- Year 10 Drug and Health Day;
- Red Cross Merchandise sales;
- Tourist Guides for Japanese Visitors.

The core group of SAT members took minutes of all meetings and kept records of community-based contact and consultation. They reported back to College Assemblies and College Newsletters and held regular meetings of the core SAT group.

Outcomes

In its first year, the Student Action Team developed a promotional video for Driver Education for Youth (DEFY). This involved liaison with police, Bendigo City Council, SES, and Prime TV.

The SAT experienced some frustration with the development of the mobile billboard Road Safety Project, particularly in the amount of time that was required to make all the enquiries and contacts and to comply with the regulations from the various agencies.

Outcomes for Team Students

The SAT elective teachers wrote up units of work and an evaluation of the classroom-based SAT activities. Students in the elective received written reports of their involvement at the end of the semester.

The group worked well as a team, according to both teachers and students. The Team consisted of capable students, and their confidence and capability increased through participation in the project. One student became particularly capable in public speaking forums as spokeswoman for the group, and participated in forums and radio interviews.

All students had a confidence boost from their participation. They all spoke at whole school assemblies and at local council forums, and to prominent adults in the community (eg council representatives, chief of police, principals of Bendigo Senior Secondary College and Flora Hill Secondary College. Their skills in this area were greatly improved. Teachers reported that all members of the SAT team would now 'have a go' at anything.

Sustainability

The College is seeking funding for a Youth Development Project under the auspices of Red Cross to be offered as a two-year elective beginning in Year 9. If this is successful, the project will link into Student Action Teams and will provide a mix of outdoor adventure activities to develop leadership, problem-solving and team-building, as well as encouraging these students to develop a culture of community service.

It was felt by the teachers involved that students could take a more pro-active role in the development of future projects and activities associated with the SAT.

Program Achievements and Outcomes

The Student Action Team Program set out five broad areas of objectives and specified performance indicators in each of these areas. The evaluation collected information at both central and school levels around these indicators. The following is a summary of this information:

Objective 1:

Implementation of Student Action Teams within 15-20 Victorian Secondary schools by the end of June 2000.

Team Formation in Schools

All 20 schools that were selected and funded under the Program, formed and maintained Student Action Teams in their first year; eleven of these schools formed continuing or new teams in the Program's second year of implementation; only one further school, in its second year of selection within the Program, failed to form a team - and subsequently withdrew from the Program. The quality of team functioning and of results was highly variable, with a large degree of 're-forming', 'storming', 'frustration' and 'searching' reported by schools. However, all participating schools report (in the stories contained in this report, and in Program newsletters) substantial results at a community level.

In using the term *'ad hoc'* to describe Teams, this Program made major assumptions about the appropriate school structure for Student Action Teams, and this assumption may be contradictory to the aims of curriculum integration expressed elsewhere in these Objectives. In turn, the orientation information to schools may have encouraged the particular ways in which schools **did** implement the Program.

In general, schools responded well to an *ad hoc* formation of teams. To some extent, due to timelines and processes adopted (see below), they had little choice other than to form *ad hoc* or responsive teams. They formed small teams to attend the initial training and, in most cases, these teams continued to be the core of their school's SAT. Students were mainly withdrawn from classes to meet, to plan and to act, or worked during lunch times and other breaks.

Though this created some difficulties in allocation of time for activities (and schools adopted creative solutions to ensuring that this happened) and, in some cases, it meant that plans proceeded slowly, this *ad hoc* formation of teams also resulted in two positive outcomes:

- **a high identification of students with Student Action Teams:** because students largely chose to be on the team, or felt honoured to be chosen, many started their involvement with a high commitment;
- **the flexibility of the team to work on local issues in a responsive way:** the team could suspend activities if appropriate, start again when appropriate, or change directions.

Most of the schools reported teams continued to function throughout the two (separate) years, with students (including some who had been previously marginalised within school activities) turning up regularly for team discussions and work, and taking responsibility for planning and implementing action.

The formation of identifiable teams within schools provided an avenue for local government to contact schools and raise local issues. It also enabled students and schools to identify their own local priorities for community safety issues.

The initial training concentrated strongly on the processes of team operation. It is therefore pleasing that while schools reported wide variations in how well their teams continued to function, there were, overall, positive results.

Frequency of Meeting

Some teams met relatively infrequently, and these were often constrained by other student commitments. Sometimes this could be negotiated satisfactorily: at other times, the constraints severely limited what teams could do.

> "Occasional meeting - met twice. Need to have more regular meetings, maybe every fortnight in lunchtimes. Not in subject time."
>
> "The team meets fortnightly as required, with students withdrawn from classes. Fairly casual about meeting, but pushed by (the teacher)."
>
> "Team meeting once a week on Tuesdays; work around student commitments."
>
> "Meeting in class time, when teachers have frees. There are time constraints particularly re after-school meetings. They have been trying to meet weekly."
>
> "Group meets informally, sometimes at lunchtime and sometimes out of class."
>
> "We found it hard to find the time to meet due to students' other commitments. However, we managed to meet fortnightly mostly."
>
> "Meet when required, sometimes in class time, but mostly in lunchtime. No problems with this. Some meeting in class times as withdrawal."
>
> "Met regularly during peak times of projects - then, at times, didn't meet for several weeks."
>
> "The team has not met for the past month. They try to meet every three weeks. It is difficult to establish a time because of the general demands on students and the difficulty in meeting after school as one student lives 30 kilometres from the school and if he misses the bus the teachers have to drive him home."
>
> "The structure is 'ad hoc', generally responding to demand rather than any 'productive' planned approach. The teachers are trying to address this but find it difficult because they don't want to 'add any more pressure on the kids' and there are a few difficult teachers who are making it impossible to take the students out of class for a meeting."

For other groups, regular meetings out of class times were organised:

> "The team meets at lunchtime. They were meeting every second Friday morning but they now meet when necessary, but still once every two weeks. The project is not part of any subject at this stage."
>
> "Meetings are held during lunchtimes on a fortnightly basis. During Community and Violence Awareness Weeks, students met during class-time and between them divided tasks to be undertaken. The team worked very well - interacting, taking on jobs they felt confident in and communicating between themselves on meetings and possible projects."
>
> "The team has a meeting at school each fortnight. There are many other informal meetings and discussions, including on-site meetings."
>
> "We met regularly at lunchtimes. Approximately each two weeks or once a week.... We made an action plan and students were given responsibilities for doing specific tasks... Initially the meetings were good (but) as the time (year) passed, we had problems with us all meeting together due to other commitments."
>
> "The team has a planning session each week. This is done by withdrawal from class. The team also discusses the project a great deal informally."
>
> "The students have been most flexible with meeting times and very cooperative... The members have shared the workload and remained focused on completing the project. They have needed direction and motivation from their SAT teachers. However they were very focused on task and eager to complete the project-recommendation stage."
>
> "The team meets each week at lunchtime."

Other teams managed to meet more regularly, and this was often linked to integration of teams with curriculum or co-curriculum structures:

> "Year 9/10 class of about 23 students doing VYDP; meet Monday (2 periods), Wednesday (1 period), Friday (1 period)."
>
> "Now part of weekly activity program."
>
> "The core team hasn't met separately, but as part of overall SRC. This meets weekly on Fridays in class-time, rotating between periods."

Team Processes

Some schools also described the internal workings of teams. Some talked of the formal structures that had been set up:

> "The group has elected a President and a Secretary who take the leadership role. Meetings are organised and quite formal. The SAT team has their own bank account and manages all the groups finances."
>
> "Have tasks such as Treasurer, video-maker etc... There were problems when the team felt they couldn't see the end of the project."
>
> "Evolved into one principal organiser who kept all records and made major organisational contacts."
>
> "We used a business plan, including these parts: project summary; operating; contingency; marketing; financial; timeline. Initially good progress, but relationship breakdown between the girls jeopardised the project."
>
> "The four central students (executive) met separately at times to direct the project. The larger group met regularly as well. Meetings were on an average once a week. The four worked fairly equally, with one clear leader emerging."
>
> "Extremely harmoniously. The meetings of the 20 students were often difficult, but the central four were very efficient and enthusiastic and committed."

while others discussed the more informal tensions and solutions within their groups:

> "Worked very well - some tension grew but overall, students were friends before and thankfully still are."
>
> "Some dissension with the present leadership. Talk of replacing executive."
>
> "Excellently except for the one boy. The girls were very cliquey and giggly and he felt too awkward and different. They tried to encourage him, then to boss him, but at the same time, they banded together criticising him."
>
> "Extremely well to the point of working together during holiday and weekend time."
>
> "Could have been better. But the two girls saw it (the project) through till the end and I was very impressed with their commitment. The boys needed to learn about cooperation."
>
> "They have become good friends (attend each others' birthday parties). They have all gained confidence - initially only one was willing to speak publicly. Now all will 'have a go'."

Other schools commented on the degree of formality of meetings, and raised concerns about the decision-making relationships within the group:

> "Not very formal like SLC. Round table, everyone has a say."
>
> "Students left decision-making to teachers (did we hijack it?)"
>
> "Students a bit bewildered... Took a while for task needs to crystallise - so some students had no idea what it involved leading to doing too much and so dropped out. Members left; but the current team is working quite well."
>
> "The students are active. One period of planning is too long - they wanted action immediately. Anarchy ruled lots of decisions, debates, humour and sharing of experiences. The students were restless that we were getting no-where with the park: 'Why can't they build it?' It all came together with Skate Competition: organising contacts, publicity, sponsors, e-mailing friends. The students organised and ran the event - old buggers like me knew nothing about this."

Overall Program Planning

There was initial development and acceptance (by the Reference Group) of a broad project plan that specifies objectives and indicators of performance. This plan was subsequently used at the end of 1999 to report to the Reference Group on achievement of work tasks.

This plan included:

- program advertising to schools and documentation of the selection process;
- development of training specifications;
- development of an evaluation framework by the evaluation team and adoption of this by the Program Manager.

Funding

The Department of Justice provided funding to the Department of Education for:

- grants to schools;
- organisation of central activities (professional development, group meetings);
- provision of training;
- evaluation services;
- central Program management.

The Program established a Reference Group, identified and allocated human and financial resources and produced briefing material for schools.

The funds for schools were linked to the **concept** of Student Action Teams, and the funding thus was symbolic of being supported within a Program, and of a commitment from the schools. In the end it enabled some training to be bought and some local activities to be pursued by schools.

In several of the schools, these funds were regarded as being under the control of the Student Action Team, and a student 'Treasurer' was appointed. This became an important indicator of the seriousness with which the Team was regarded, within the school, within the community, and by the Department of Education.

At the local level, many of the actions taken by the team were low cost and could have been supported through normal school arrangements. However, apart from its symbolic value, funding support for Student Action Teams is important centrally to bring Program personnel together, to provide training and briefings, to provide support for schools and so on.

Objective 2:

Sustainability of Student Action Teams in Victorian schools within the normal resources available to school communities in line with a longer term aim to maximise their implementation in Victorian schools.

While there is strong indication from many schools participating in the second year of the Program that they intend continuing the Program in 2001 and beyond, there has not been a formalisation of this. However, at a central level, the responsibility for the Student Action Teams Program has, in 2001, been located within the Middle Years of Schooling curriculum programs area of the Department of Education, Employment and Training in a way that maximises opportunities for its integration and sustainability within on-going programs.

There remains some uncertainty whether, without the symbolism and commitment of being part of a Program (with implied support and requirements), the existing schools will maintain a substantial Student Action Team program. The 'sense of occasion' and external commitment is important in maintaining schools' commitment to these approaches.

Curriculum Planning

The Program's work plans rely on the selection of schools which demonstrate an 'on-going commitment' to Student Action Teams, and for development by these individual schools of integration plans. In some of the schools there have been explicit plans developed to integrate their Student Action Teams into curriculum areas. These have all occurred within the SOSE KLA:

- at Euroa, the SAT may be a unit within Community Studies;
- at Kyneton and Ovens, SAT-style community action will generally occur within SOSE;
- at Weeroona, a SAT-style elective will exist in years 9 and 10.

In other schools, this integration has happened with the school's extra- or co-curricular activities:

- with Student Council structures at Princes Hill (where SAT activities will be incorporated within Student Forums);
- at Karingal Park (where the SAT has already operated as a sub-group of the Student Leadership Council);
- with VYDP at Heatherhill and Braybrook.

One school in particular noted difficulties associated with achieving this goal:

> "Trying to get SAT up and running next year as an elective was very difficult. It was seen as a soft option and not taken seriously initially. The SAT teachers had to lobby the curriculum coordinator and principal, and eventually it was put onto the curriculum for 2nd semester as a year 10 SOSE elective."

Training

Training for SAT participants was specified in the Program's work plans both through the initial out-sourcing of training service provision (to Australian Red Cross - Victoria) and through a statement indicating that the Program would develop other training 'as required'. The initial orientation session for teachers (conducted by the Department), and the one-day teacher training and two-day student and teacher training sessions (organised by Red Cross) targeted teachers, principals and students and were conducted at the beginning of the Program's implementation in schools.

No other activities were initially organised centrally. However, in response to concerns about schools' understandings of community safety and related directions, the evaluation team organised a half day professional development activity in September of the first year (1999) for teachers and closely associated personnel (ie some Shire personnel). The team also organised two one-day reporting, sharing and evaluation sessions for students and teachers, at the end of each of the two years.

Documentation

The Program specified three documents as contributing to this objective:

- An initial 'Expression of Interest' pamphlet was produced in 1998, which outlined the Program and invited schools to submit a proposal;
- The Red Cross **Leadership Manual** - a draft version of their **Red Cross Community Challenge** manual - was presented at the initial training sessions and dealt with issues of team formation and operation, leadership, and community action. The final version was later made available to schools. This material was generic to community action and leadership, rather than specific to the Student Action Teams program, and lacked any community safety focus.
- A self-evaluation of the training days was produced by Red Cross, drawing upon feedback from participants.

Subsequently, other support documentation was produced.

- Three newsletters were developed by the evaluation team, and these included both documentation of school-level activities and overall Program and evaluation issues;
- A Student Action Teams **'How To' Manual** was commissioned as part of the evaluation brief. A budget was allocated to produce a limited number of copies of this Manual.

Schools commented on the early documentation and information they were given about the Program. While some were positive about the clarity of this material:

> "OK - clear understanding of incorporation into curriculum etc";
>
> "The action plan from the DOE was useful - we used it for our SRC training day";
>
> "Objectives were clearly stated";

others criticised it as being broad and lacking detail:

> "Not very detailed";
>
> "Initial information was OK - broad, but the brochure was not that clear";
>
> "The original guidelines and information was vague and very broad."

This breadth and generality was also seen by one school as being valuable:

> "Very broad which was good";

but others would have preferred more detail:

> "There is a need for greater pre-structuring of program."

There were similar criticisms of the follow-up to the initial discussions or of the processes both outside and inside the school:

> "The pre-information material did not arrive in time. It got lost in the principal's office. So the students had no idea what they were in for. They wondered who else would be there and the teachers wondered if the students were "marginalised" enough";

> "The school was rung and invited to a meeting in Melbourne to establish project guidelines. The school only had 3 or 4 days notice. The teachers felt the rural nature of the school as well as the importance of school end of year programs was not taken into consideration. The meeting was scheduled for the second last day of fourth term."

Objective 3:

High levels of integration of Student Action Teams with the development and implementation of local community safety and crime prevention initiatives, by local government, police and other government agencies.

In several instances there was close liaison and integration of the activities of Student Action Teams with local community safety and crime prevention initiatives; in other schools this relationship was looser and paralleled community-based initiatives; in many cases the links with formal community safety and crime prevention initiatives were non-existent and schools pursued school-based agendas. While eight schools reported links with Safer Cities and Shires Program personnel in September 1999, only two of these later (in 2000) reported that these were 'on-going', with three others mentioning occasional contact. However eleven of the schools mentioned links of various sorts with local Police.

Where there was prior awareness of the Safer Cities and Shires program, and where student-based plans coincided with the local priorities, Student Action Teams were able to make a substantial contribution to research and recommendations around local community safety and crime prevention. However, only a very small group of schools was involved in this formal way. At Melton, for example, there were very close links developed with the Shire's Safer Cities and Shires Program: students carried out a youth component of local surveys, and their findings and recommendations have been incorporated into the Shire's reports and plans. At Heatherhill, there has been close liaison in both training and action activities with Fire and Police Services. In other projects, this linkage is more distant, for example at Karingal Park, there were initially difficulties in liaison, but the Student Action Team eventually worked on and achieved results in collaboration with Police, Council and other groups.

Where teachers were keen to explore these connections, and where there were strong pre-existing relationships with community programs, Councils and community personnel, the integration of SATs with local initiatives developed well. However, many schools found that the topic chosen by students or by the school did not lend itself readily to formal community safety or crime prevention approaches and programs. In other cases, larger time resources (and concomitant funds for teacher release) were needed to enable this to happen.

Schools were asked to identify the community organisations with whom they had worked. Apart from those mentioned above (Police particularly), ten schools reported links with local government, while others mentioned liaison with Neighbourhood Watch, the SES, the Department of Corrections, VicRoads, a First Aid instructor, the Artists in Schools Program, local newspapers and Prime TV, various Youth Services and Youth Advisory Committees, Police and Community Consultative Committee (PCCC), the Safety House Program, The Centre for Continuing Education, various welfare and health organisations (including Berry Street Family Services and the Salvation Army), recreational and hobby groups, a golf club, Youth Parliament, Calder Park, and Operation DEFY (Driver Education for Youth).

Education Links

("Integration of the Program with other Department of Education initiatives")

The Student Action Team Program might have expected to develop in association with other educational initiatives with similar philosophies and objectives: Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE), the Victorian Youth Development Program (VYDP), Student Welfare initiatives, the Student Leadership Council program and so on. Personnel from each of these areas had representation on the Program Reference Group, and the need for connections was mentioned in the briefing to schools.

At a school level, there were few links reported with these or other areas. For example, both Karingal Park and Weeroona had Civics and Citizenship Education and SAT support, but programs were administered by different teachers and few in-school links developed.

The one exception related to the VYDP: in two of the schools, there was close integration between SAT and VYDP - to the extent that a VYDP class was also a SAT class in one instance, and the activities of that class were meeting the objectives of both programs.

Community Advice

("Integration of the Program with mechanisms for involving young people in providing advice to local councils, Victoria Police and other agencies regarding community safety and crime prevention issues")

There was an attempt at a central Program level to brief appropriate groups about the potential for the Program in facilitating provision of advice locally. The Program Manager briefed Senior Management Officers of the Department of Education, and also presented information about the Program to the Victoria Police Youth Policy External Reference Group.

The non-existence of local mechanisms for involving young people in advice to Councils and other agencies generally, has meant that community agencies turn to schools for those mechanisms. This is particularly so with respect to community safety and crime prevention, and some projects (eg Karingal Park in 2000 with driver safety, Melton on the Shire's Safety Planning) found themselves providing that advice in the absence of other mechanisms.

> The team took part in the Melton Youth Advisory Network (MYAN). The SAT members were invited to a meeting at the Melton Council offices to discuss with one of the Strategic Planners contracted by the Shire, the future needs for the Youth (2000-2003) in the Shire, based on what they perceive to be the problems faced by youth in Melton.

In other areas, the Student Action Teams built on or became an important part of the mechanisms of local Councils for addressing community safety issues (eg Banksia and Darebin Council; Melton and Melton Shire). In the City of Yarra, there was some initial contact with Student Action Teams, but this was not followed up; with Ovens, there were SAT links to Rural Pride, and to the City of Wangaratta's Junior Council, where SAT is nominally a subcommittee of this, but in practice has operated independently.

In the City of Hume, and independent of this Program (but in knowledge and acknowledgment of it), local government has taken the initiative to support the development of local SATs from their Safer Cities and Shires Project.

Community Links

Partnerships with local community organisations have occurred - generally however not with local business so much as with service organisations: at Heatherhill with the Fire Brigade and Police; at Kyneton with the Shire around a skate park; at Weeroona, with local driver education action/lobby group and with a local TV station; at Wanganui Park, in a partnership with a community house around a walkathon.

In looking at possibilities for future funding of Student Action Teams, schools noted some of their needs and potential sources:

> "SAT will be funded from within the school in 2001. A special payment is given to the coordinator."
>
> "The CFA is now directing funds through VYDP."

> "Depending on the project undertaken, funding needs may be minor or may be supplied by organisations such as the Frankston Council (as in 1999). The SLC could also offer support. KPSC has very good links with the community."
>
> "The local shire Project Officer has been supportive with use of resources eg Shire bus, photocopying and collating data. Funding is needed to assist with training."
>
> "No plans - money would be nice and the involvement would be a great boost to morale, but time constraints limit what we can do to set this up."
>
> "Most of the needs of the students were volunteered to them, ie the TV station volunteered its time and services and the construction of the sign (which never actually happened) was going to be around local community volunteering again, ie the metal for the sign, the truck to carry the sign in."

Sustainable Partnerships

("with government, community and private sector organisations")

Several of the schools report that the relationships and partnerships with community organisations have improved through the involvement of the Student Action Team. For example, Melton identifies on-going work with the Safer Cities and Shires Program and with local government generally, Heatherhill talks of a range of community linkages involving Police, CFA and other agencies, Wanganui Park has worked closely with a community house, Mitchell with the local Council, and Princes Hill with a local retirement home.

Many of these links have been specifically linked to projects carried out by the SAT, and whether these relationships are sustainable without participation in a program that stresses community-based action will need to be tested over time. However, many of the schools remain committed to such local and community-based partnerships at this time, and there is a sense that the development of Student Action Teams occurred within an on-going interest and commitment to such partnerships. The schools talk of improved links, understanding and acceptance:

> "Improved profile of the school within the community."
>
> "A productive connection with local government - potential for this to continue especially if Local Government capitalises on the SAT experience."
>
> "Acceptance by the school community of the importance of students working on projects which link school and community."
>
> "Strengthening of links with the community. People from the old people's home now regard the school as a resource, come up to the school to get Stat Decs signed and ask students to program the VCRs."
>
> "The establishment of a group of students that is active in organising events for students to be involved in the wider community."
>
> "Recognition for school for initiative and endeavour in community."

None of the schools report any significant partnerships with the private or business sector, and relationships within these projects have been, as noted above, functional - sourcing of prizes, or subjects of research.

Objective 4:

Personal and educational outcomes for students

The achievement of personal and educational outcomes for students involved with Student Action teams is the strongest of the Program's achievements. It is clear from teacher, student and other comments that those students involved with SATs gained a great deal from their participation. This is especially true where schools did target specific students in need.

As noted in the comments on the evaluation methodology, assessment of these outcomes relied largely upon teacher reportage. The Program work plan suggested that schools might develop baseline measures of understanding, but also pointed to the need for 'anecdotal evidence from teachers re students' personal development' and 'student self assessment of personal development as a result of SAT'. The following sections rely heavily upon such evidence.

Increased knowledge and awareness of community safety issues

The focus on community safety by school projects, and the concomitant understanding of such issues by students (and teachers) was identified by the evaluation team in 1999 as an issue of concern. This issue appeared both as a confusion within schools about objectives, and also as a relative inability (in many cases, by both students and teachers) to articulate what community safety meant to them and how their project focus related it. Thus these links were targeted with a teacher Professional Development day during the first year and also in the end of year discussions.

At the 1999 end of year day, comments from students indicated a strongly increased understanding of issues of community safety:

The evaluation team wrote in its report of December 1999:

> **Community Safety Focus:** The evaluation highlighted, in an earlier report, a concern that ideas of community safety were poorly understood and addressed within some of the projects. It also suggested that this might be an issue related to how schools presented their work (ie they understood these links, but did not make them explicit). It now appears from the more focused discussions on the evaluation day that the concepts and issues of 'community safety' are much clearer to all participants - specifically to students. Some students expressed a sophisticated analysis of community safety issues on the day. It may be that we are seeing a more explicit acknowledgment of underlying ideas, but should also recognise that the decision to include an emphasis on such issues in the teacher and joint teacher/student days has brought these learnings to the fore.

Each school is now able to identify how it has tackled issues relating to community safety: eg at Karingal Park, through activities around the community path and safe driving - organisation of a seminar, speakers, and local action; at Banksia, through organisation of a Safety Week; at Euroa, through Safety House activities; at Melton, through research on perceptions of community safety and targeting of an 'unsafe' street; at Weeroona, through development of a Driver Education video clip, and so on.

At the end of the project, outcomes reported by schools include:

> "We have increased our understanding of community safety. We can say what safety is and explain it to strangers. The consequences are safety at school and trust of parents." Amongst the general students: "Maybe there isn't much difference, but students seem happier to attend school. SAT members noticed less students at the train station and beach. They felt this was good since there were less people to cause trouble in the community in these areas.
>
> "Students became aware of the dangers created by unsavoury people eg murders and the need to make improvements to the environment to ensure the safety of the public, eg the need for lighting, cleaner land, lollipop lady supervisors and police as a positive force."
>
> "Increased understanding of the role of Council, and increased ideas and push for local development."
>
> "Students say they have noticed a reduced speed from drivers on this road and less people are being assaulted. The road itself is less busy and that may have to do with the cinema no longer being there."
>
> "Students understand that community encompasses shop owners, consumers, public (global vision); the need for surveys and the importance of surveys to gather information. There has been a significant increase in understanding of community issues and the operation of local government."
>
> "Improvement in understanding is most obvious (interestingly) among students who went to the primary school and observed anti-social behaviours."
>
> "The students understand social safety: - linking and communicating with people in the community; the kids learnt to see beyond themselves to the community eg links with the old people's home."
>
> "There was increased awareness but it came about differently to the way it was expected. Bendigo Safer Cities and Shires apparently thought they could 'control' the SAT team and utilise their time for them; this is when DEFY was created and the students opted to have as little to do with the Bendigo Safer Cities as possible. Certainly their work on the video absolutely highlighted the issues of community safety issues."
>
> "They can see that it has many aspects - more than they first knew of."

Personal development of students including enhanced communication and teamwork skills

Again, schools point strongly to the skill gains of those students involved in Student Action Teams. A range of skills involved in project organisation and implementation were identified. These included: letter-writing, telephone skills, public speaking, organisation of events, and media liaison.

The comments from both teachers and students indicate the substantial improvement of these by participants. The observations of the evaluation team also support this: in visiting schools and meeting with students over two years in some cases, the growth of individuals in confidence and in skills is apparent. This growth is also dependent on how schools targeted the students for participation at the outset of the Program. While some schools picked students who were highly skilled or confident leaders to start with, others concentrated on or included those who were more marginalised or experiencing school failure.

In the following comments, schools point to a range of improvements in skills, abilities and attitudes. While it is difficult to separate comments, the following areas are particularly noted:

public evidence:

> "To achieve such a very successful event - self-run by the students."
>
> "Some participants have been spokespeople with newspapers and organisations. There has been evidence of increased participation in other activities and improved concentration on tasks... Some disenchanted members have become more assertive. Spokespeople have gained more confidence in speaking publicly."
>
> "One of our SAT members asked to be the student representative on the School Council."

group process skills:

> "Skills definitely re organisation, leadership and cooperation as a team... They've learnt a lesson about the importance of putting in cooperatively particularly as they experienced (one student) not cooperating and not putting in... They're much more confident in contacting community leaders and other official personnel."
>
> "Students developed research skills and leadership skills. They understand the consultative processes of school better. Confidence, self-esteem, and problem-solving skills have improved."
>
> "Students point to increased leadership and organising skills with opportunities to use these skills elsewhere."
>
> "Students say that they feel they have better leadership and organisation skills as well as better communication skills.
>
> "No impact on results or academic records is apparent, but they're more willing to negotiate a compromise, and to adapt themselves slightly to deal with different personalities."
>
> "Hard to quantify. There's hear-say evidence and verbal comments. Increased involvement levels are clearly identifiable... More mature interpersonal discussions and greater open-ness and increased ideas when meeting as a team."
>
> "Fantastic development – from working out who to ring/speak to for support, to writing press releases/articles to speaking to the media on TV and radio. SAT members have met many politicians and have learnt to speak their mind with tact and respect. They have learnt to rely on each other."
>
> "Increased team work, enterprise learning, presentation skills (they did it once and saw how easy it was); being in control of things with a responsibility for carrying through."
>
> "Communication skills - they're more articulate, can speak to a variety of people. Leadership skills - being an individual and a team leader at same time. They learnt about press releases, can write formal letters, approach people personally, give input at meetings eg with local council."

personal skills:

> "Their public speaking skills have increased; this is evident at in-service days, in using leadership skills in organising some of the events. The increased confidence and self-esteem have transferred to more success at school... They are stronger and more able to convey ideas, have gained confidence in expressing point of view both through the training and expectation to undertake SAT projects."
>
> "Students have improved public speaking skills."
>
> "Improved oral skills in public speaking/presentation, verbal/social skills in communication with elderly people, interviewing and writing of oral histories, growth in confidence in social situations, leadership skills. They

have learnt a lot about realistically developing projects, about the operation of meetings and about generating positive energy in the face of negativity. It has 'allowed' students to be positive and involved in activities beyond the classroom and beyond their peer group."

"Slight improvement academically, improved attendance and less behavioural problems."

"All have greatly improved, through having to speak to 'high flying' adults in the community eg council reps, chief of police, principals. All in the SAT team will have a go at anything now... Everyone in the group had to have a role and they all had to learn rather quickly. In terms of communication skills, leadership skills, the capacity to be a team player and public profiling (speaking to other students about what they were doing) really increased the skill level markedly."

confidence and self-esteem:

"Public speaking skills, confidence, initiative, self-esteem, ability to verbalise and present ideas have all increased... They're confident enough to be interviewed on radio and TV, accept awards, and make speeches. They're able to address a variety of people and circumstances appropriately."

"Some students are more trustful of some adults at the school. Communication skills have been improved - but they still have a way to go.

"Students say they've gained in independence and team work."

"Self confidence, public speaking, working as a team, preparing to speak to an audience, independence and responsibility have all improved."

"Strong growth in self-esteem infected students in a range of areas. Altered (for the better) morale among the year 9 level."

"SAT girls persevered so they got to do things and work at things . They are now moving up in the school and are more powerful in the school."

At Risk

("Targeting of project to include a wide cross section of cultural and other groups of students, including young people at risk of being marginalised")

The issue of 'at risk' or 'marginalised' young people appeared early in discussions by the schools, but there is some reportage of confusion as to what this might mean. While it is raised as a question by some schools following the initial teacher training, it does not appear to have been raised or clarified here. As a consequence, practice varied enormously, and this became obvious at the initial student training days.

At a Program level, the participants were strongly representative of a wide cross section of cultural and other groups of students, but this arose principally through the variation in understanding of schools.

Some schools interpreted this criterion as a need to focus specifically on students who were not experiencing connection or success in the school; others ignored the issue entirely and sent their 'traditional school leaders' to the training as team members. In assessing the schools in the first year of the Program, it is possible to classify 4 of the 20 schools as initially targeting 'students at risk' in some capacity, while 9 initially chose high ability or succeeding or leading students. For the remaining 7 schools, the team was formed from a mixed or 'average' group of students.

("Enhanced school capacity in responding to the needs of young people at risk of being marginalised")

The evidence is confused as to whether there was any enhanced capacity of schools to respond to the needs of marginalised young people, as highlighted in the previous sections. Only in a very small number of cases was this specifically addressed, and in one of these, the young people remain relatively marginalised within the school (though relatively empowered personally through the success of the SAT project).

The success of a SAT project may affect the way in which the school responds to **these** young people (ie they are seen in roles of competence and success) but this may or may not be generalised to other young people or sustained over [illegible] period of time.

When asked specifi[illegible]bout this, only a few schools commented, and then often ambiguously:

> "The policy put in place (initiated by relatively marginalised students on the team) has convinced the school administration and student management team that the student body is serious about improving the behaviour of students and keeping students at school, giving them every opportunity to succeed."
>
> "If you want to have change in the school, you need to get the leaders involved."
>
> "The school is very open to listening to the needs and wants of students. SAT has responded well by supporting student proposals. However as a whole there is no separate group to run such things. The SLC is probably so effective in doing this task that no other is essential."
>
> "This original objective had always been part of our school's philosophy. So SAT offered reinforcement of the value, and an additional vehicle for achieving it."
>
> "Engagement of students: SAT provides more opportunity to be involved. SAT is doing visible things and is genuinely a student voice. Students can say what they think. Students can nominate themselves so not only voted in. This gives them a way into the school and a role in the school."
>
> "But it wasn't really about catering for the marginalised or at risk. The students were already competent in these areas and had some leadership skills."

Accreditation

("Potential for educational and/or community service accreditation")

The potential for accreditation of Student Action Team work has been shown to exist within the project and some models have been explored by the schools. Of the initial 20 schools, 13 clearly indicated that some form of school-based credit was being provided for students at the end of the first year.

This accreditation included:

- establishing the SAT as a specific subject, elective or unit within the curriculum and providing 'normal' subject credit (three or four schools have attempted this, but it requires adequate notice, time to develop 'subject outlines' and mapping against CSF II);
- establishing SAT work as a 'negotiated exemption' for work requirements within existing subjects (at least one school mentioned that this was happening; again it requires a willingness for teachers - often not SAT support teachers - to negotiate such 'credit', and to have a 'work requirements' approach in place);
- adoption of a 'portfolio' assessment system, to which SAT work and outcomes can be added (perhaps some schools were using such an approach, but none specifically referred to it in these terms);
- certification specific to SAT (many schools provided students on the teams with some form of 'extra' certificate noting their participation; the parity of such certification with other forms of assessment in the school is an issue);
- a reference or similar letter (several schools also reported providing this in terms of leadership issues);
- some communal recognition, such as a plaque or school certificate (many schools mentioned developing such a public statement, usually to be hung in the front office).

While some form of community service accreditation may be possible, with certification from local, statewide or national groups, none of the schools seems to have pursued this for more than isolated components of the Program (eg First Aid training).

These forms of accreditation need also to be distinguished from forms of 'recognition' of the students' work in SATs - either through presentations at school assemblies, information in newsletters or local media, or access to privileges (lunches, excursions etc). Of equal importance (and this relates clearly to issues of the curriculum placement of SATs), is the issue of recognition of SATs through provision of time to complete activities within the officially recognised and approved processes and structures of the school.

Some schools resisted incorporation of Student Action teams into the curriculum, arguing that the engagement of students in a voluntary activity meant it should be better addressed through 'ad hoc' teams. However, issues of accreditation are still appropriate within this structure.

Issues associated with accreditation are also addressed in the **Issues** section of this Working Paper under 'SAT and the Curriculum'.

Objective 5:

Value added outcomes for schools.

Substantial questions remain as to whether the operation of Student Action Teams over a relatively short period has had much on-going or broader impact on the schools. Much of the school change literature indicates the need for sustained input of such programs over several years if there is to be a meaningful impact on school practices.

Contribution of the Program to curriculum frameworks and business planning processes of schools

A small number of schools report that they have included or are planning to include Student Action Teams or similar approaches within their curriculum approaches, principally (as noted earlier) in SOSE areas. When asked about the impact of SAT on the school's structures, a few schools provided curriculum related responses:

> "Trying to get SAT up and running next year as an elective was very difficult. It was seen as a soft option and not taken seriously initially. The SAT teachers had to lobby the curriculum coordinator and principal, and eventually it was put onto the curriculum for 2nd semester as a year 10 SOSE elective."
>
> "A new aspect introduced to year 9-10 SOSE curriculum to study community safety. SAT achievements have impressed the staff and they have given them good feedback."
>
> "An indirect effect in that Health Education is a charter priority and SAT supports this."
>
> "Plan to submit a proposal to the Curriculum Committee to consider this as an elective in the year 9 curriculum. It could be managed by the Middle Years Reform Project."
>
> "Curriculum structures: students can submit completed work (eg public speeches, oral histories) in English and SOSE; School structures: The Student Forums (SRCs) are tied in with SAT for development of projects. Home group structures (new in 1999) incorporated SAT and Forum business. Student and Staff Welfare: staff see the issue of student involvement and a student 'voice' as an essential part of the school."
>
> "SAT will be an elective in year 10, in the 2nd half of the year, for 4 sessions per week, linking with Duke of Edinburgh Award. SAT will help encourage the growth of encouraging leadership and citizenship throughout our College. (later) There will be an emphasis on changing the timing of the elective from second semester to first. There will also be some energy put in to raise the profile of the elective amongst students and staff. We had to build in the budget for the elective, we had to push for it to be included as an elective; it was originally put down as an 'optional elective' which really equals a 'mickey mouse' option. We have now been successful in pushing the profile of the elective back into the 'mainstream' options!"

while others talked in terms of an impact on environment, staff-student welfare, procedural matters and so on:

> "Projects have increased community awareness and support. Got an award from the Education Foundation for excellence in community action and this is funding further student action."
>
> "Mainly on student morale, pride, leadership. No structural changes."
>
> "I guess it has highlighted the need to give students a voice and this isn't happening enough. Kids have the skills and we need to create opportunities for them to use them."
>
> "Not much: but it will next year... At this stage, it's very ad hoc. Students negotiate with teachers of relevant subjects and are given credit, replacing another work requirement. The plans for a middle school unit on 'leadership' have been shelved for the time being. It is impossible to see any change in this respect."
>
> "An outcome is an increased tolerance of teachers for students missing class to be involved - this extends to thinking creatively about how to negotiate credit for work done."

Integration of the Program with programs in individual schools related to student and staff welfare and security

Again, this Performance Indicator assumes that there are clear student and staff welfare and security programs in schools. In some cases within the schools represented, the absence of such a policy has been an issue that Student Action Teams have addressed - in one example, students from the team developed, presented and advocated for a Discipline and Welfare Policy (where there had been an absence of a policy since 1993) and had it adopted by the School Council. Similarly, Banksia's SAT initiated a Safety Week and incorporated a school fire drill; at Karingal Park, the team worked to re-develop a pathway near the school where there was substantial student and staff concern about their safety.

When asked about the SAT's impact on welfare issues, there were very few comments:

> "The Welfare and Discipline Policy leads to better understanding by all members of the school community and thus action by various people. It makes for a safer environment for all concerned in the school and wider community."

> "The programs each dealt with the needs of students and the community as issues arose. Staff welfare was only addressed indirectly as a result of the programs eg a sense that they may not have to suffer the trauma of a student death through careless behaviour."

> "The school has been developing a package of projects across year levels to foster leadership skills. SAT has become integral to that package."

> "There is the hope that what they do in the elective will spill over into their everyday school life, that the leadership skills will able to be utilised in other capacities. It is also hoped they gain confidence in the way they relate to adults and perhaps be more comfortable around them. The program did offer leadership opportunities so it really gave the kids a chance to change things for themselves, ie their attitude about school and how they approached the elective (ie as a bludge or an opportunity to really make a difference.)"

Issues and Possible Directions

In this section of the report, several of the issues that have emerged in previous sections are discussed in more depth. These lead to an indication of Program 'learnings' and possible directions. The views expressed here are based on the information provided by schools, but developed by the evaluation team.

Understanding of Community Safety

Many teams initially experienced frustration with the issue of community safety. Although there had been initial and explicit descriptions in the information pamphlet, teams were not as aware as they should have been of this focus.

In the first round of evaluation interviews, there were questions about the project's interpretation of and relation to community safety. Responses indicated to the evaluators that some of the projects had little or no idea at that stage that the projects **were** to be focused on community safety. To that point they saw their Student Action Team as a project around 'community links' or based on 'leadership' or 'team building'. They found it difficult to articulate how this had anything to do with safety. More substantial connections were only made for some of the teachers when they attended the half day in-service in September and heard from some highlighted schools and from Safer Cities and Shires Project representatives. Some then felt they had to try and reinvent their project in terms of community safety.

When the projects had links to the Safer Cities and Shires Project eg at Melton or where the broad initial focus of the school had a title with the word 'safety' in it, this provided an obvious starting point for discussion between the school and community organisations.

> "Our focus was on 'Youth Safety in Melton' and the most unsafe/unfriendly area was identified and considered. The SAT met with Emma (Safer Cities and Shires Program Officer) and discussed youth safety in Melton. Together we then prepared a survey using the Safer Cities and Shires Survey as a base."

The challenge was then in bringing that broad focus on 'safety' to a practical level on which the students could act at a school level. For example, Karingal Park had a strong community safety focus from the beginning of their work, with a structure that enabled community safety to be placed at the centre of the project. Here, the team and the project were initiated at a Student Leadership Council (SLC) camp at the beginning of the year. The SLC has a Community Safety sub-committee and this group forms the nucleus of the SAT.

By the end of the first year of operation of the Program, the evaluation team is reasonably confident that most of the 20 schools had a clearer grasp of what community safety meant. At the end of year day organised for November 1999, students 'brainstormed' around the topic and some presented a quite sophisticated analysis of the 'levels of meaning' of community safety. They identified areas of personal safety and community safety, and distinguished between physical safety (ie dangers, risks, threats) and social safety (ie connectedness). One teacher wrote: "The PD day morning session certainly made my student who was with me more aware of what community safety involves and its various possible strands and links."

Some of the themes from the discussion about community safety included:

At the community level:

- feeling safe on trains and public transport, therefore being able to be self reliant for transport;
- not feeling safe around train stations, tunnels and around drug dealing/usage;

- safety practices in the home (Heatherhill);
- having a secure environment or making an environment feel secure after a negative event happening eg the murder on the track in Karingal Park;
- identification of safety 'hot spots' (Melton);
- safe places to go - including safe night entertainment/dance parties (this lead to a direction for Berwick);
- safe places to engage in activities eg skating (Kyneton and Bright);
- responsibility for public property (eg public phones - Banksia; Chandler - graffiti in the portables: "The original aim was to broaden our students' sense of community responsibility for taking care of shared property");
- driver safety (Taylors Lakes, Weeroona, and Karingal Park in 2000);
- linking and more positive relationships with the police (several examples).

At the school level:

- concern for the safety of students at primary and secondary school eg Safety House Program - Euroa; Braybrook - first aid issues; Altona - safety while truanting ("away from the associated risks to themselves and the community, when truancy occurs"); fire drills and self defence classes at Banksia.
- concern for issues on the 'edge' of the school eg at Maribyrnong: "They saw it (safety) as 'school safety' and saw school as being a fairly safe place generally. They then identified issues to do with the 'edge' of the school ie the dangers of a path to Highpoint - muddy, rough, cars speeding in the car park."

Many of these 'safety' issues could also be seen as involving issues of school or community 'connectedness' and 'belonging' - the skating issues at Kyneton and Bright, the truancy issues at Altona and so on. One school noted the need for "Developing an interactive ownership between students and the community; this is new ground as most of our students feel a disconnectedness that often initiates negative actions within their community" while another commented that their students were "more aware that they have power, will be listened to, ideas considered, acted on. They are important members of community who have some control." A further school expanded on this: "... if you empower youth and promote leadership qualities and decision-making skills, this in turn will generate safer environments and cities." And: "I think they understand the importance of linking up with people beyond their own social groups and to have a sense of responsibility for the community. That community is within the school and beyond the school; that a sense of community is vital to people's sense of well bring, confidence, self-esteem."

However, some schools still struggled with such definitions and saw this as only an 'indirect' way of dealing with community safety: "The cross-cultural projects indirectly touch on safety - by attempting to break down barriers and diminish divisions."

Understanding of 'At Risk' Requirement

The original Program Outcomes included the statements: "Targeting of the project to include a wide cross section of cultural and other groups of students including young people at risk of being marginalised" and "Enhanced school capacity in responding to the needs of young people at risk of being marginalised." It is clear from these statements that it was originally intended that the Student Action Teams Program would have a substantial component of including 'at risk' students in its focus.

Yet reports from schools indicate an uncertainty about this issue, both in terms of direct reportage of their understanding, and also in what they actually did. Only a small number of the teams directly addressed this issue, while many of the schools clearly chose students who were already experiencing success and were leaders within their schools.

The notion of 'at risk' is problematical, and when we look at the practice of schools, various definitions appear to be used: Altona focused on students who were at risk of not attending school, and who were 'leaders' in non-traditional ways; Heatherhill made a brief mention of including some at risk or marginalised young people in the second year of their project and one non-attender was included in the leadership activities. (It was reported that this participation had improved her attendance over the year.); Karingal Park mentioned the inclusion of students from marginal groups but included the leaders from these groups to make the project acceptable to the other students.

A small number of schools very clearly embraced an idea of focusing on 'at risk' students through developing a project specifically around their needs: Altona, Kyneton, and Bright are all examples of an explicit project focus defining the team. Others were inclusive in creating a small team of 'ordinary students', while not specifically focusing on marginalised students (Maribyrnong, Banksia); some included a mixed group of students as a simple consequence of the inclusive or 'open' processes in setting up the group (eg at Braybrook where students joined an elective). Some of these projects were based on ideas of leadership that is open to all (not just the most popular), and through this, may have been able to involve students who were more passively disengaged or had not as yet found an active role in the school. For example, Princes Hill used the relationship between the SAT and their Student Forums to engage some of the students who would not normally have involved themselves there. Because students nominate and vote themselves onto the forum, the SAT gave some students who wouldn't have been voted onto the forum, a different chance to have a role within the school.

Another approach was used at one school (Taylors Lakes) where successful 'leaders' were chosen for the SAT, but the team then took a focus in its work on projects engaging 'at risk' students. The SAT members mentored or supported these students. Such an approach can risk being patronising, in which some students 'do good works' for others, however it **does** build in a specific action component for team members around issues of marginalisation.

For projects choosing already successful students in the school, this was an expression of the need to develop and complete a successful project. They felt this was not possible with 'at risk' students, or that the effort required would be too expensive of teacher time and effort. In one project, that the teacher admitted he was not comfortable with 'at risk' students and thus had hand picked students with whom he **was** comfortable.

In a context in which schools feel they will be 'judged' to have succeeded or failed in the operation of a project, it is not surprising that working with 'difficult' students or students who have not been achieving success elsewhere, is of decreased priority. This is especially true where relatively little resources are being offered, where there is no central focus on how to develop such an approach, or where there are confused and possibly contradictory messages about 'leadership' and 'success'.

Having said that, it is recognised that a community-based program that emphasises 'real' work, responsibility, and 'hands-on' activities, provides opportunities for different ways of learning for students who aren't succeeding in 'normal' ways. It can provide them with important experience of trust and success. On the other hand, a tightly targeted Program can also ghetto-ise the issue and the approach. However the Program can also be careful to **include** students who are or who are 'at risk' of failing and disconnection, and the teacher who operates such processes of inclusion may have clear intentions and plans (in the way responsibility is allocated, and the way in which students are supported) for the Program to have an impact on these students. It is clear that when Student Action Teams, Student Councils and a school's student welfare approaches are planned and inter-linked, the capacity of the schools to address the needs of individual students is greatly enhanced.

The other issue that needs to be addressed is the degree to which the Program has changed the way schools deal with 'at risk' students. Such a change might be seen in:

- the ways that student welfare is regarded in the school;
- a diversification of curriculum approaches to meet different learning styles;
- the development of school projects in which 'at risk' students do valuable things within existing curriculum options; or
- teachers trying different teaching approaches within individual classes.

Training - Leadership, Team-work, Community and Safety

The initial training for the Program in the first year consisted of a one-day session for teachers, followed by a two-day session for students (and teachers accompanying them). This training would need to serve several ends: an orientation to the Program, development of skills in leadership and team-work, an introduction to working in and with the community, assistance to develop a specific school-based project, and clarification of the scope and constraints of the Program.

The immediate response from schools after these two events was very positive. The evaluation carried out by the Australian Red Cross - Victoria team indicates a high level of satisfaction with the skill development and to the ideas and structures for community work that were emphasised during these days. Teacher response, particularly after the first training day, was also positive, but raised more questions and concerns with processes, and with issues of focus and selection of students.

Overall, schools rated the training activities as fun, as energising and as motivating. They praised the activities around leadership skill development and the emphasis on working as a team. They particularly liked the opportunity to meet with other schools and share ideas (and this re-emerged as a positive aspect of the end-of-year days.)

> "Students liked the ideas from the other schools."
>
> "They liked meeting other students."
>
> "Met new people and it was good for developing self confidence."
>
> "It was helpful and fun, but focused on working as teams."
>
> "Leadership, listening, understanding; we enjoyed the group activities - preferred them to work; the training was exciting and useful. It gave us more chance to talk to other schools."
>
> "The training was good fun. Students learnt some leadership skills. The team has used some of the planning steps."
>
> "It was fun - they thought it was going to be boring. They were comfortable there. It emphasised teamwork and working with strangers, cooperation and group skills, task-related material."
>
> "Positive - a very good experience. The students talked about it excitedly on the way home. The training covered most of the points needed to explain SAT. The structure was good and they particularly appreciated the mixing with other schools. The teachers were also positive, though they felt they knew much of what was covered. They were impressed with the students' reaction. They used the free time on the second day to go through the manual as a group, and begin planning."
>
> "They thought the training was very practical and useful. It was helpful in terms of team building skills. It was very well planned and thought out. There was a real difference in what they knew before and after the training day."

However, further into the project and in the light of their experience with implementation, teachers and students from schools identified further areas that could have been included in the original training:

- more specific information on community safety;
- more time and more guidance for school groups to engage in their project planning; and
- more 'prescription' or concrete ideas about what sort of projects would be acceptable.

They said, for example:

> "We would have liked the training to address how to find a project, or have had a project in mind when first attending training so we could have used the team building exercises to enhance this."
>
> "We wanted more time to identify issues at the training day as a group."
>
> "The students would have liked the nitty gritties of how to get started eg letter writing, leaving messages, how to persist. The training only focussed on the 'top layer'."
>
> "The students came away not knowing what they were meant to be doing, but it was fun. The training was general and needed more examples. They were unclear about the overall aims after training eg community safety."
>
> "They would have liked follow up activities and a regular date to give a response about what they were doing."
>
> "The students said they expected more of a leadership style training, with information about how to go about the project. Instead they played games, for which they could see no obvious purpose. One student felt the training emphasised teamwork rather than leadership. They didn't feel their expectations were met. It didn't

> provide a clear direction for the project. The activities were fun but they would have done much the same without the training.... The school planning session was positive."
>
> "Needed more on the specific issues - a process on how to carry them out. Also more on how to choose issues and knowing what to do. A hypothetical problem could have been given and groups taken through steps to solve issues; planning a long-term project. Collecting information techniques could have been covered more."
>
> "Students would have liked more time at the end. They would have liked to have been with their own group more often to check out the dynamics of the group: to see what works and what doesn't."

It was also suggested that the training could be in response to needs and therefore timed to occur further down the track.

These issues - of needing training and support in response to needs that emerge from practice - also impinge on the overall training and support structures of the Program. This was provided in three forms:

- Opportunities for Red Cross to provide specific school support. The initial Project Brief for the training specified that the trainer would "provide on-going support throughout 1999 to all participating schools". This support was offered, and those schools that requested visits and assistance were followed up.

  The experience of schools was uneven: some "liked the understated approach of Red Cross who were available if asked", while others were "not clear" or "didn't know that could have ongoing support." One school reflected the approach as their own responsibility: "Support is open-ended. It is up to us to seek guidance or help if required." Less than half the schools reported requesting or receiving further training or support.
- Red Cross provided draft and final forms of the Leadership or 'Community Challenge' manual to schools for use in project development. Again, experiences were uneven: some schools "used the manual to develop our own manual for training", while others indicated that they had only looked at some sections or had not used it at all - "It's sitting on the desk but I've not looked at it. It would be better to have a one-page step-by-step guide."
- The evaluation team provided some support in the data collection visits. All schools were visited several times and this provided schools with regular if limited contact with the overall Program. The team also set up an e-mail list linking schools, but this was seldom used.

Support, Drive and Accountability

The development of Student Action Teams benefits from identification of schools as part of a Program. The funding available (as noted elsewhere) was relatively small, and the principal 'drivers' of schools' participation (in terms of continued motivation and remaining 'on task') were:

- the intrinsic success and worthwhileness of the projects at a local level;
- requirements for sharing information with others;
- other external accountability requirements;
- identification as and commitment to being part of something larger than the single project.

This latter area is reinforced by the conduct of central events, in which projects come together to hear about what other schools are doing, and to receive information and advice that will be useful for them 'back home'. Particularly in contexts where difficulties arise, and where students and teachers meet barriers in the implementation of Student Action Teams, such events are both appreciated and empowering, as schools collectively (rather than individually) struggle with difficult ideas about curriculum development. Some schools mentioned the need for outside support to 'inspire' and 'encourage' both students and teachers.

The experience of the evaluation team was also that their visits to collect Program and project data became visits that provided support and advice to teams and teachers. Further, the announcement and negotiation of a visit also created project action, as some schools had to quickly 'establish some achievements' in order to have something to say about their progress to the evaluators!

Organisational Sustainability

Many of the schools involved in the Student Action Team Program in 1999 and 2000 talk enthusiastically about keeping their teams operating in some form after the end of the Program:

Some of these schools talk about the curriculum or co-curricular arrangements they will make:

> "It's linked to the SRC - not a subject. The students are a 'voluntary group' coming out of classes."
>
> "We may look at introducing it as a middle school elective."
>
> "It's become a permanent part of SRC."
>
> "It will indirectly continue: we'll take the training and concept and incorporate it into the running of the SRC."
>
> "The class will continue, so the project will be maintained within the VYDP class."
>
> "My partner and I have ideas - I am Student Participation Coordinator at my school and other person is Pupil Welfare Coordinator. So we see lots of potential but we want to meet the new students next year to plan with them possible project/s."
>
> "We'll keep possibilities for forming a SAT open for next year, using 2 periods per week (Wider Sport Education time). If there's no funding, we'll take on a no-cost project or very low cost using funds rolled over from 1999."
>
> "We have plans for the school to continue it with cross-participation with the Victoria Police Corps participants. The SAT Coordinator will be responsible in both areas."
>
> "Next year, the SAT approach will be a part of the English curriculum in year 9. I will take on the role as adviser as will the current other students."

Others talk of the resourcing implications:

> "We will try to be on-going, even if funding is difficult to find. That's part of the learning experience."
>
> "The City of Greater Dandenong has been wonderful in its 'in-kind' provision of human and physical resources."
>
> "Local Government already have assisted with the photocopying of surveys, collating of results and providing a bus to do site visits."
>
> "The program will continue on good will for some time."
>
> "Some money is left from the program. We're seeking money from alternative sources - possible to get some from FarmSafe Alliance (we hope)."

Program Objectives emphasise the development of ways in which Student Action Teams will be sustainable. The onus, in this regard, was placed upon schools to find the resources internally or locally to support the continuation of their projects.

The nature of this support needs clarification: very few Student Action Teams required extensive local funding for the operation of their projects. What they did acquire - very successfully in some cases - was the provision of human and in-kind resources at the local level: personnel time, specialist media involvement, use of local buses.

Similarly, the in-school resources required were more likely to be teacher time rather than funds. Sustainability issues need to address the issue of provision of coordination and support within staffing allocations. The experience of the Program over two years has been that a crucial element is to have the commitment of a few staff members within the school to giving the SAT priority. They have integrated this commitment with similar duties eg support for the SRC, and only in a few cases have received time or financial allowances for these roles.

If the SAT support teacher has a leadership position within the school (eg Curriculum Coordinator, SRC support teacher, Student Welfare Coordinator), it appears more likely that SAT approaches will be sustainable. Alternatively, SAT approaches will be sustainable if they are adopted within the mainstream curriculum approaches of the school - and this issue will be discussed further in the final part of this section of the report.

It is also argued here that, faced with competing pressures within a school for allocation of human and financial resources, sustainability of a Student Action Team approach will also be enhanced by two other factors:

a) **the school's commitment to and adoption of an identified Program focus.** That is, schools are more likely to persevere with these approaches, in the face of difficulties and constraints, if they have made a commitment to be part of a Program for which they get 'kudos', publicity and credibility.

b) **the provision of professional development and other support.** Teachers and students involved in Student Action Teams (a relatively new, different and challenging approach in some cases) need encouragement and advice from colleagues and other appropriate personnel to move out of the comfort of conventional practices. Obtaining such support is probably beyond the resources of individual schools, and is a further function of providing a whole Program focus.

So, what began with the identification in the Program Objectives of financial issues at a local level, has become focused more on human resourcing issues at a whole Program level:

> "Like any key function, its impetus derives from the energy and enthusiasm and commitment of people behind it - funds are not the only motivator."

Why some didn't continue

Of the twenty schools funded in the first year of the Program, eleven were re-funded for a second year. It is instructive (in considering issues of sustainability) to look at why nine of the schools **didn't** continue into the second year.

The nine schools can be divided initially into six that didn't apply for a second year, and two that did and were refused a project extension. One further school applied, was accepted and received funding,.but later decided that they couldn't continue and withdrew from the Program - it really is a seventh school that decided not to continue.

Amongst the other that decided not to continue, the reasons varied from school to school. Four schools had not developed a strong project focus in the first year, nor experienced motivating success. While they had developed teams and carried out some activities, there was neither a strong commitment, nor strong excitement (from staff mainly) about being in the Program. There was a sense that the effort and changes involved in the approach outweighed the financial and other benefits from being in the Program. In fact,. some had not spent the first year's grant, and found it difficult to conceive of what they might **do** in a second year.

In one of these schools, the move to active student participation and ownership was interpreted as handing nearly all the responsibility to a group of students. Although the students worked through a number of problems, they did not continue with the project and found it difficult to find direction and achieve anything. The project faded away during the first year and the teacher and students did not attend any of the central professional development days.

In one other school, teachers said they didn't receive the invitation to apply for an extension, and (in the second year) felt they were still occasionally implementing their project. The other school initially expressed an interest in applying for an extension, put in a very brief outline, but did not follow this up with a detailed proposal. To some extent this school had achieved its project focus from the previous year (which had pre-dated the Program), and was not enthusiastic about 'artificially' developing or identifying a new focus. The school that later withdrew did so because of internal staffing difficulties: the nominated teacher took leave and no-one else in the school undertook to take on support for the SAT - when the original teacher returned, the school felt it was too late to pick up a project (momentum had been lost) and it was decided to withdraw.

In applying for a second year's participation in the Program, schools were asked to address three criteria:

- The nature of the community safety issues to be addressed;
- How they would document their processes and outcomes during the year;
- How they would link with a neighbouring school or schools to foster their involvement in SAT.

The first of these issues arose from the evaluation team's concern that project links to community safety were not explicit; the second issue was an attempt to ask schools to be more reflective and self-reliant in assessing processes and outcomes; the third was directed at issues of sustainability, through an attempt to ask Program schools to spread the concept to others.

In the two schools that applied and were refused Program extension, the Program Manager identified difficulties with the school's expression of the community safety linkages. It was recognised that their proposals may have had merit within areas of community liaison and/or student leadership, but that the Program wished to have a sharper understanding of community safety embedded in its second year.

SAT and Curriculum

In looking over what schools in the Program have done, we can identify several options:

- Some schools have operated Student Action Teams within their existing curriculum. For example, it has been an optional unit within a core SOSE and English program, an elective within a block of choices, a VYDP class (ie a specific form of elective), or an activity within a flexible activities/negotiated curriculum block. In these cases a time allocation has often been provided for a teacher as part of a teaching load;
- Some schools have operated Student Action Teams within their existing co-curricular activities. For example, it has been a formal sub-committee of the Student Council, or has been given a status alongside the Student Council, in order to provide other ways to enable participation and leadership. In these cases, there is sometimes a small time or responsibility allowance for a teacher, usually pre-existing, and often tied to 'student participation' or 'student leadership';
- Some schools have operated Student Action Teams as an 'ad hoc' or special program outside the curriculum. A small team of students has been chosen, who meet flexibly, either in their own time or withdrawn from classes. In these cases, there is often not a formal recognition of teachers' time unless support is generically linked within another area of responsibility (as above or for student welfare);
- Some schools have operated a mixture of these models, for example, creating a small team outside the formal curriculum, but encouraging and supporting time and credit allocations within subjects (eg as a VCE Unit 1 and 2 Communications project, or within a Health subject, or by providing 'negotiated exemptions' or 'negotiated replacements' for work requirements - in English, SOSE, Art, Drama, Media) or within an awards scheme, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme.

In many of these cases, the schools have recognised that, after two years, the Student Action Teams Program (and its approaches) are still in an early stage. "Hopefully," says one school, "it will help influence a whole College culture of leadership and citizenship."

Curriculum Sustainability

As noted above, issues of Program sustainability finally come to consideration of the place of Student Action Teams in relation to the formal and informal curriculum of the schools. If such approach are to continue beyond initial funding stages, or outlast the enthusiasms of the initiating teacher, they must have a place on the timetable and within the 'normal' operations of the school. This can ensure that students can participate without penalty (missing classes), that teachers can be provided with time to develop and support Teams (through a time allotment), and that resources can be allocated (through school and subject budgetary processes).

What is potentially lost, as both students and teachers pointed out to the evaluation, is the excitement, commitment and flexibility that comes with a group (of students, principally) that volunteers to be involved with a project they identify, in which they believe, and around which they can take meaningful action and achieve worthwhile ends.

Program Learnings

The evaluation is able to suggest some program learnings based on the above discussion. These draw together suggestions in the previous two sections of this Working Paper and define aspects of the organisation of a Student Action Team program that seem to be crucial to successful outcomes.

Program Identification

A Student Action Team Program is more likely to be successful in achieving its goals if schools clearly identify themselves as part of an initiative. This means commitment to the Program and its objectives, access to training and other Program events, and opportunities to meet and share experiences with other schools within the Program.

Program Planning

A clear and comprehensive Program Plan for such an initiative should exist. It should include:

- requirements for on-going support of schools by trainers or a support team;
- development of guidelines for school action including a focus on issues of 'community safety' and 'at risk';
- plans for training and professional development to ensure schools are supported to achieve objectives;
- 'milestones' for school accountability in terms of activities and commitment of funding.

Timelines

Adequate advance notification of Program operation and of a school's selection is required to enable school-level planning. It is suggested that schools need to know they are part of a Program, and be briefed about requirements, by October of the previous year.

A Program timeline should be developed that includes advance and detailed outlines of plans for:

- **the set-up phase:** notification of schools; formalisation and approval of school-level plans;
- **reporting procedures:** against local objectives (eg monthly or each term);
- **Program Professional Development:** bringing together personnel for input, sharing, and training, particularly around overall Program objectives;
- **end of year arrangements:** reportage of outcomes, celebration, sharing etc.

Many schools required considerable time to develop effective Student Action Teams. Such a requirements interacts with the amount of notice provided to schools, and thus to the ways in which Teams were or weren't integrated into curriculum structures. Where, for example, teams met in ad hoc ways, decision making was often slow.

In general, even where the actual 'action' period is short, schools need a full twelve month timeframe to plan, organise, initiate, research and carry out their projects. This also enables Student Action Teams to plan and implement smaller projects within a larger context, and to learn and develop their approaches based on reflection on their work.

Payments

Payments to schools should be staged against reportage milestones; schools need to be asked to produce statements of expenditure.

Planning for Achievement of Objectives

If there are objectives to be achieved, the Program Plan needs to specify the activities by which these will be addressed. The Program needs to organise support and training activities for staff and students explicitly around possible processes to achieve these objectives eg sustainability through local funding, curriculum integration, school change processes, selecting and working with 'at risk' students and so on.

In particular, where project linkages are encouraged with community sector organisations, opportunities should be organised to bring community and school personnel together. For example, it might be important to organise a seminar early in the Program, to bring together teachers, Safer Cities and Shires personnel, other local government representatives and other appropriate officers; this would sharpen the focus on community safety, brief both school and community personnel on Program approaches, and enable the establishment of personal links, upon which project development could occur.

Information about the existence of local initiatives needs to be supplied to schools and this information built upon, with models provided for liaison and integration, with local support identified and with central opportunities created (eg in training) to discuss and develop these links.

Program planning also needs to be flexible and responsive to schools' needs. Where a need emerges, for example for a Professional Development activity for school staff, this should be easily included within Program planning, funds allocated and the activity implemented.

Orientation and Training

The first formal contact that a school may have with the Program is a briefing or orientation session. This should occur well before the implementation phase. Project constraints (eg a community safety theme) need to be clearly outlined at this stage, and there should be specific discussion around the nature of projects and approaches that would meet community safety themes. Where any funding or sponsoring arrangements mandate the overall Student Action Teams topics and approaches, a similar discussion is essential.

This needs to be followed up with schools to ensure that discussion around these themes occurs with and within the Student Action Team. A Program should be asking for information from the schools early in their development, about the nature of the project, and its link to important Program requirements.

Initial training for teachers and students within a Student Action Team Program is essential. This training and associated materials should be specific to the operation of Student Action Teams, rather than generalised 'leadership', 'teamwork' or 'community liaison' training.

It is essential to:

- ensure that the initial training clearly covers critical requirements of the Program's objectives;
- include the provision of on-going support for schools as a requirement and expectation;
- develop specific training events (for both staff and students) during the Program's operation, in response to the developing experience and needs of schools.

While the content of on-going training should be responsive to schools and teams' needs, the structures of these training needs (and some of the likely contents) can be foreseen and planned for within the Program's cycles.

Program-School Liaison

A Student Action Team Program needs strong Program management, including:

- in-built and regular support mechanisms that maintain regular contact with **all** participating schools, including visits by the Program Manager to schools;
- regular reportage milestones (such as a simple monthly or end-of-term reporting sheet or template), preferably linked to use in information sharing mechanisms eg a Program newsletter;

- clear timelines and formats for reportage;
- financial accountability processes that link funding to on-going achievements, that clarify any constraints on Program expenditure, and that provide ideas for productive use of Program funds;
- linking of accountability mechanisms to schools' global budgets and to the performance plans of key personnel;
- opportunities (through newsletters, seminars and other 'key events') for Program participants to feel they are part of a Program rather than individually funded and isolated schools and teams;
- pre-organised events for Program participants to share learnings;
- specific recognition of the needs of such Programs in regional and rural locations, where issues of isolation (eg distance from other schools with similar initiatives) are greater.

Further, in a Program that draws support, inspiration and focus from other areas of government, it would be valuable to build in opportunities for other Departments and agencies (in this case: Department of Justice, Safer Cities and Shires Program personnel, the Municipal Association of Victoria, Police) to visit project location and see projects in operation. Where these links are made at a personal level, there is generally strong support for collaboration, and this needs to be pre-planned and built into the Program's operations.

Curriculum Integration

The relation of the Program to the overall curriculum of the school must be a considered decision that responds to the situation, needs and possibilities within each school. That decision must be made in full cognizance of issues of sustainability and effective operation and of the commitment and excitement of students and staff. The decision and the structure may also evolve and change over time.

Issues of staff welfare must acknowledge the pressures placed upon staff who support Student Action Teams which are 'ad hoc' arrangements or additional or 'co-curricular' responsibility. Addressing the curriculum issues of Student Action Teams through allocation of a time allowance is also a staff welfare and safety issue, as is ensuring that sufficient notice is provided to schools to allow for pre-planning of such initiatives.

Sustainability

To be sustainable, the experience of the Program to date suggests that:

- the identification and resourcing of appropriate school personnel is vital;
- professional development and training is needed for new and continuing members of staff and of students involved in projects;
- SAT networks need to be developed between schools to encourage sharing, advice and inspiration (for students and teachers);
- schools needs the status and legitimacy for Student Action Team approaches provided by a systemic or Program approach;
- project funding has a symbolic value in assuring schools of central support, as a marker of participation in a definable Program, as an encouragement to take initiatives ("We'd consider re-doing it if funding exists") and in focusing local publicity;
- while such project funding is sometimes practically useful for activities at a local level, the continued practical operation of Student Action Teams within schools does not depend on funding at this level.

Schools that have set up close relationships with outside agencies or sponsors, will continue drawing on this 'in kind' or 'good will' support for as long as common and shared value projects exist. However, more pressing as a sustainability issue is the need for someone at the school to coordinate and support the projects, and the central Program professional development and training to support that role.

The lessons from previous schools point to the following factors as crucial:

- Who initially applied for support within the Program is important to continuity. Expressions of interest were called for, and selection decisions made, late in each school year. This meant that there was little time to start involving teachers before the end of the year. The holiday break was a major discontinuity and, in some cases, the person who initially applied for the grant had left the school and someone else had to be found to take on the project. Some schools in the Program had already passed responsibility to another member of staff before the project had started in the first year. One teacher had done the application but had then had too much to do so had been passed it on to someone else. This had meant a lack of ownership and responsibility for the project from the beginning. The project was simply another job to do. Continuity of interest is important: mechanisms to ensure that schools can guarantee adherence to their proposals need to be built into the selection process;

- The importance of identification of the 'right teacher' to support Student Action Teams has previously been mentioned and is reinforced here. That teacher must be someone with an understanding of and commitment to SAT processes, and who is comfortable and confident in the job;
- The selection of a staff member also includes a commitment from that person, or from the school on their behalf, to seeing through the project ie not to be planning to be on leave for critical times, or if that is the case, having plans within the school to maintain the project;
- The Program centrally has a responsibility to maintain closer links and communication with the school, both to check and re-check about communication, and also to negotiate requirements. There should not be that sense of distance and lack of understanding where schools feel they are 'guessing' what might be required;
- Such an interactive approach would be valuable within the proposal and decision-making phase, to ensure that those considering applications understand what is intended, provide advice and feedback in the construction of proposal, and thus can make informed judgements about the capacity of schools to carry through with their plans;
- Part of the value of professional development and training activities for teachers and students is to build a sense of understanding of overall Program intentions and the development of shared purpose.

We learn from the schools about the importance of:

- a flexible, innovative and respected person as the Student Action Team support teacher;
- providing the staff member (and hence the Program within the school) with the status and role in the school eg through a Position of Responsibility;
- a significant role for school leaders within or as support for the operation of the Student Action Team;
- building upon initiatives that the school would probably have done anyway, or classroom approaches that were already in operation, and then enhancing that through provision of funding, focus and training;
- building upon existing links between the school and its community, either in the form of community-based projects, or personal contacts.

Appendix 1:

Initial Program Information

The initial pamphlet from the Department of Education outlined the Program's background and aims:

> The Student Action Teams Program is a component of the Vicsafe *Community Safety and Crime Prevention Framework*. Student action teams will involve young people working together with teachers, local government and other community groups (within the Safer Cities and Shires Framework) to investigate, identify and implement strategies for promoting safer communities.
>
> The aims of the Program are to:
>
> - involve secondary school students in school based groups working together with teachers and other professionals to investigate, identify and implement strategies for improving community safety
> - improve and extend leadership opportunities amongst participating students
> - secure the sustainable implementation of Student Action Teams within the normal resources available to Victorian government secondary schools.
>
> The purpose of the Program is to develop Student Action Teams in government secondary schools in a manner consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Victorian Government's Vicsafe *Community Safety and Crime Prevention Strategy.*
>
> School based partnerships to enhance community safety is an important component of the *Youth Community Safety and Crime Prevention Strategy* currently being devised by the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Board.
>
> Schools have been identified as providing an ideal base for developing a range of strategies that aim to provide young people with opportunities for leadership development and participation in their local community, opportunities for learning important skills in action based research and development and opportunities to play a role in local problem solving initiatives.
>
> Funding has been made available by the Department of Justice to the Department of Education to provide seeding grants for Student Action Teams. Investment in this Program will aim to encourage and empower young people in schools to develop project teams and partnerships with teachers, police and members of other agencies to help create safer communities.
>
> ### Implementation
>
> Implementation should reflect an integrated approach to incorporating other curriculum based activities of students and the fostering of linkages with a range of other professionals and community groups to contribute to the research, planning and implementation of a range of community safety initiatives.
>
> The selection of activities to be pursued by each Student Action Team will be decided by the team and depend on the issues that arise in any school and local area. Program and strategy options *may* include:
>
> 1. Strategies to promote safe sport and recreation, safe routes to school and personal safety.
> 2. Strategies to foster expanded cultural understanding and care for vulnerable groups in the community.
> 3. Action-based research to investigate and respond to local community safety issues such as:
>   - local recreation and public transport options
>   - issues surrounding young people's use of public space
>   - any of the fourteen key issue areas arising under the Safer Cities and Shires Program.
> 4. Strategies to achieve reductions in school bullying and non-attendance.
> 5. Strategies to deal with drug and alcohol abuse.

Appendix 2:

Schools Involved

1999

Altona Secondary College
Banksia Secondary College
Berwick Secondary College
Braybrook Secondary College
Bright P-12 College
Chandler Secondary College
Euroa Secondary College
Heatherhill Secondary College
Karingal Park Secondary College
Kyneton Secondary College
Maribyrnong Secondary College
Melton Secondary College
Mentone Girls Secondary College
Mitchell Secondary College
Ovens Secondary College
Princes Hill Secondary College
Ringwood Secondary College
Taylors Lakes Secondary College
Wanganui Park Secondary College
Weeroona College

2000

Altona Secondary College
Banksia Secondary College
Euroa Secondary College
Heatherhill Secondary College
Karingal Park Secondary College
Kyneton Secondary College
Melton Secondary College
Ovens Secondary College
Princes Hill Secondary College
Wanganui Park Secondary College
Weeroona College

Appendix 3:

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Youth Research Centre

The Youth Research Centre is located within the Faculty of Education at The University of Melbourne. It was established in 1988 in response to a recognised need by the youth affairs sector for relevant and up to date research on the issues facing young people today.

The aims of the YRC are to:

- identify local, national and international research issues relevant to young people;
- conduct appropriate, relevant, and useful research that addresses these issues;
- promote research agendas and policies which contribute to an understanding of the full range of life patterns of young people, and which support young people's capacity to exercise increased control over their lives;
- promote and encourage awareness of youth issues amongst research students and within departments and research centres of the University;
- facilitate communication between educators, researchers, policy makers and people working in the youth sector;
- facilitate national links and collaborative research on youth issues across different sectors, including education, health, youth work and juvenile justice;
- strengthen international research links and scholarship in the area of youth policy.

Youth Research Centre Activities

The YRC has particular expertise in research on education, transition pathways, social justice, gender equity and employment issues as they affect young people.

The main YRC activities are:

- undertaking research and publishing the outcomes in a manner accessible to policy makers and the youth sector;
- providing information and policy advice to governments and other organisations;
- assisting and encouraging individuals or groups who work with young people.

YRC activities involve:

- undertaking small projects for groups lacking the capacity or opportunity to do so themselves;
- providing a base for post-graduate students wishing to undertake Masters or PhD research on topics related to young people and the youth sector;
- enabling academics to participate in established YRC projects, and/or undertake their own research on youth related issues;
- maintaining a youth sector resource library;
- publishing series of Working Papers and Research Reports;
- conducting public seminars and conferences on a variety of issues relevant to those working in the youth sector.

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